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(54) NON-SPECTROPHOTOMETRIC MEASUREMENT OF ANALYTE CONCENTRATIONS AND OPTICAL PROPERTIES OF OBJECTS

NICHT-SPEKTRALFOTOMETRISCHE MESSUNG DER KONZENTRATION VON ANALYTEN
SOWIE DER OPTISCHEN EIGENSCHAFTEN VON OBJEKTEN

MESURE NON SPECTROPHOTOMETRIQUE DE CONCENTRATIONS D'ANALYTES ET DE
PROPRIETES OPTIQUES D'OBJETS

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Description

Background of the Invention

5 [0001] The present invention relates to the measurement of the concentration of constituents of interest using radiation, preferably near infrared radiation. More particularly, an apparatus has been developed which utilizes a method of measuring the concentration of constituents such as glucose, alcohol, hemoglobin and its variants such as deoxyhemoglobin, myoglobin, and other reduced or substituted forms of hemoglobin or heme-group containing molecules, drugs of abuse or other clinical analytes in a non-invasive manner. Because the apparatus and method do not require

10 a finger puncture to obtain a blood sample, they are particularly suitable for home glucose testing.

[0002] With the spread of AIDS, and the associated fear among the public and health care personnel of contracting the disease, development of testing methods that do not require invasive procedures, including the taking of blood samples, has become an important goal. Not only AIDS, but other diseases such as hepatitis may be spread through invasive procedures if adequate precautions are not taken. For example, a recent article, "Nosocomial transmission of

15 Hepatitis B virus associated with the use of a spring-loaded finger-stick device," New England Journal of Medicine 326 (11), 721-725 (1992), disclosed a hepatitis mini-epidemic in a hospital caused by the improper use of an instrument for taking blood samples. The article describes how the nurses were unintentionally transmitting hepatitis from one patient to another with the sampling device itself. This type of disease transfer is eliminated by non-invasive testing.

[0003] Effective management of diabetes has also given rise to the need for non-invasive testing instruments. Many

20 diabetics must measure their blood glucose levels four or more times a day. Instruments currently used for in-home glucose testing require a painful finger prick to obtain a blood sample. Although the price of these instruments has dropped considerably, such testing requires the use of disposable materials that can be cumulatively costly. Further, the discomfort, inconvenience, and health risks associated with frequent puncture bleeding are considerable.

[0004] Accordingly, a number of groups have recently tried to make non-invasive instruments for measuring the concentration of various analytes, particularly blood glucose. Much of the recent development work in non-invasive testing

25 has been exploring the use of the near infrared spectral region (700-1100 nm). This region contains the third overtones of the glucose spectrum and its use eliminates many of the water bands and other interference bands that cause potential problems for detection. However, substantially all of this work has been carried out using classic spectrophotometric methods. These methods use a set of narrow wavelength sources or scanning spectrophotometers which scan wavelength by wavelength across a broad spectrum. The data obtained with these methods are spectra which require substantial data processing to eliminate (or minimize) the background. Accordingly, the relevant papers are replete with data analysis techniques utilized in an attempt to extract the pertinent information. Examples of this type of testing

30 include the work by Clarke, see United States Patent No. 5,054,487, and the work by Rosenthal et al., see, e.g., United States Patent No. 5,028,787. Although the Clarke work uses reflectance spectra and the Rosenthal work uses primarily transmission spectra, both rely on obtaining near infrared spectrophotometric data.

[0005] One problem with all such methods is that spectrophotometers were conceived primarily for accurate wavelength-by-wavelength measurement of spectral intensities. Where, as in non-invasive measurement of the concentration of glucose and other clinical materials, the analyte of interest has weak broadband spectral features and is present in a mixture containing other substances with substantially overlapping broad-band spectral structure, use of classical spectrophotometric methods employ substantial, and ultimately unsatisfactory, data analysis in an attempt to extract the

40 desired concentration from a background of interfering signals. One basic principal of all measurement is, however, that the measurement step determines the information content of the data, and that computation or transformation adds no information. In other words, no amount of analysis can make up for the fact that the distinguishing features of the spectra of the analytes of interest are not the sharp spectral peaks of classical spectrophotometry but rather are broad and shallow structures. The analyte is identifiable not by the location of its spectral peaks, but by the global structure of its intensity versus wavelength structure. Since spectrophotometers are not designed to generate this kind of information, they are ill-suited for measurements of this type.

[0006] The spectra of the analytes of interest, consisting of a few weak low resolution features, with overlapping backgrounds, are reminiscent of the spectra of reflected, emitted, or transmitted light from colored objects in the visible. The

50 human visual system, while an incompetent spectrophotometer, is superb at the subtlest color discrimination and identification, even under greatly varying illumination conditions. Therefore, the present invention draws on an analogy with the discrimination of colored objects by the eye, rather than classic spectrophotometric measurements, to obtain data, preferably in the infrared.

[0007] Many related but distinct approaches are possible in developing an apparatus and a method for measuring the concentration of an analyte of interest by exploiting the analogy to color perception in the visible. The primary approach

55 is to illuminate the object with broadband radiation, the analog of white light in the visible, and to use a series of spectrally overlapping filters to detect the reflected, emitted or transmitted radiation to determine the object's relative "color." This approach is disclosed in United States Patent Application Serial No. 914,265. The present application concerns

modifications and improvement on the method and apparatus described therein to obtain even better data. In fact, many of these methods are useful even in classic spectrophotometric systems.

[0008] While visual perception is very complex and not completely understood, one approach for relating the concentration of an analyte to absorption or reflection in the infrared is to obtain and process the raw data as closely as possible to the known aspects of color perception, utilizing a succession of steps or processing levels. Each step provides a useful product and succeeding steps represent products of greater capability.

[0009] The first step to achieve accurate information is the simple analog of color perception using a colorimetry-like approach. Colorimetry is numerical color communication in which three dimensions are used to describe the color. It is the trivalent nature of color vision that permits color to be specified in a three dimensional space.

[0010] There presently are several such three dimensional colorimetry spaces in use. One of these spaces is the CIE 1931 (x, y)-chromaticity diagram, shown in Fig. 1b, which shows hue and saturation values. Luminosity, the third dimension, is not shown in Fig. 1b but would be in a Z-direction. Figure 1a shows the standard observed spectral responses used to generate Figure 1b.

[0011] Another colorimetric space, described in terms of hue, chroma, and value, is shown in Figure 2. This solid can be described as the three numerical values which can specify any perceived color.

[0012] It is important to note that although it is convenient to describe color in terms of colorimetry, this is not true color perception which is much more complex. However, colorimetry is useful for color matching under specific conditions. An analog of colorimetry, particularly one in the infrared region, would show similar usefulness in determining analyte concentration.

[0013] There are commercially available colorimeters in the visible for measuring tristimulus values in terms of luminosity, hue and saturation, yielding numerical values such as are illustrated by Figure 1. Briefly, these colorimeters use three detectors, with each detector input being filtered with a different filter function. Each of the filter functions and detector responses are chosen to be similar to the three absorption spectra of the pigments of the three color receptive cones of the human retina. It appears that no one other than the present inventors have previously used, or even considered the use, of an analog of color perception for wavelength expanded colorimetry for concentration measurements or even applied the method of colorimetry to infrared measurements as described herein.

[0014] In addition to non-invasive blood measurements for constituents like glucose, the system could replace present pulse oximeters. Non-invasive measurement of arterial oxygen saturation by pulse oximetry is widely acknowledged to be one of the most important technological advances in clinical patient monitoring. Pulse oximeters measure differences in the visible and near infrared absorption spectra of fully oxygenated and reduced hemoglobin in arterial blood. Unlike clinical blood gas analyzers, which require a sample of blood from the patient and can only provide intermittent measurement of patient oxygenation, pulse oximetry provide continuous, and instantaneous, measurement of blood oxygen levels.

[0015] However, current commercial oximeters, and their algorithms are inaccurate under conditions of low pulse pressure and/or low oxygen saturation. These severe conditions are observed in the normal unborn fetus or where the features of interest are broad. Unlike the transmission sampling of the commercial oximeters, space limitations associated with the fetus require that the spectral data be obtained by reflectance sampling. It has been suggested that a new analysis technique using multivariate calibration methods can improve the precision, accuracy and reliability of quantitative spectral analysis. Even these techniques are limited by the type of input data.

[0016] The apparatus and methods of United States Patent Application Serial No. 914,265 solves this problem by providing infrared analogs of colorimetry. While the data provided is better than that from spectrophotometers, signal-to-background can always be improved, thereby providing even greater sensitivity.

[0017] GB-A-2,215,039 discloses an optical absorption gas sensor in which the light incident on the sample cell of an optical absorption gas sensor has a spectrum of regularly spaced lines, the spacing corresponding to the spacing of the absorption line spectrum of a gas to be monitored, and the absolute wavelengths thereof being controllable. Such may be provided by a Fabry-Perot semiconductor laser with wavelength controlled by altering the laser temperature or bias current, or by applying mechanical pressure. Alternatively a comb filter such as a Fabry-Perot type or a guided Mach-Zehnder interferometer may act on white light or light from a luminescent semiconductor device such as an LED. Light may be transmitted to and from the sample cell by optical fibres.

[0018] EP-A-0,443,267 discloses a method and apparatus for continuous non-invasive blood pressure monitoring in which pulse transit time is measured for providing a measure of blood pressure substantially continuously, non-invasively, and non-reactively. Transit time is measured by plethysmographic, electrocardiographic and/or phonocardiographic techniques, and compensation is made for elastic properties of vasculature by means of plethysmographic measurement. Pulse transit time is a measure of pulse wave velocity.

[0019] EP-A-0,555,553 discloses an arterial blood monitoring system which takes advantage of the basic statistical property of arterial blood that arterial blood contains a plurality of dominant absorbers, whose measured light absorption spectra appear as a constant over a short interval of time. The arterial blood characteristics to be measured are empirically related to the changes in the measured light transmission through the plurality of dominant absorbers as a

function of the change in arterial blood volume at the probe site. Therefore, by measuring the transmitted light as it varies with arterial pulsation at selected wavelengths of light, the relative amount of these dominant absorbers in the arterial blood can non-invasively be determined. By selecting one wavelength of light around 1270nm, where water has a measurable extinction and a second wavelength at about 810nm, a wavelength that is substantially isobestic to oxygenated and reduced hemoglobin, a direct relationship between the transmitted intensities at these two wavelengths and the arterial hemoglobin concentration will exist and can be calculated. The use of a plurality of wavelengths of light enable the arterial blood monitoring system to concurrently measure a number of characteristics of arterial blood. By selecting wavelengths of light around 660nm, 940nm and 1270nm, the values of total hemoglobin and oxygen saturation of arterial blood can simultaneously be determined. In addition, oxygen content of arterial blood can be calculated from these values of total hemoglobin and oxygen saturation.

[0020] US-A-4,278,538 discloses an apparatus according to the preamble of claim 1. It discloses, in particular, methods and apparatus for sorting workpieces according to their colour signature in which workpieces differing from each other only in their colour, are optically sorted by illuminating the workpieces with a light beam of stable colour temperature. The diffuse reflection from the workpieces is analysed by three photo-detectors, each of which is filtered to respond to a different colour. Two of the colours are primary colours, as defined by the Tristimulus Theory. The third colour is not a true primary colour but, when added to a percentage of one of the other two colours, effectively synthesizes the third primary colour. A workpiece is identified by comparing the set of Tristimulus signals it generates with a look-up table stored in the memory of a microprocessor.

[0021] Embodiments of the invention can provide an apparatus which provides an improved measure of the concentration of a constituent of interest or a determination of optical properties of an object in a sample using an analog of color perception;

an improved method of accurately, inexpensively, and quickly measuring the concentration of clinical analytes in a non-invasive manner using an analog of colorimetric analysis;

an improved apparatus for, and a method of, non-invasive concentration measurements using the analogs of colorimetry and color perception that allows for convenient sample insertion and removal and is not responsive to radiation from extraneous sources; and

an apparatus for and a method of determinations of the concentration of an analyte of interest, or a determination of the optical properties of an object with an improved signal-to-background level.

[0022] These and other features will be apparent from the description and the accompanying drawings.

[0023] The present invention is as claimed in the claims.

Summary of the invention

[0024] The present invention features an improved apparatus and methods for carrying out testing for concentration of constituents of interest or determining the optical properties of an object preferably in a non-invasive manner. United States Patent Application Serial No. 914,265 discloses an apparatus which uses, and expands upon, an analog of human vision to develop data through non-invasive testing which is much improved from that available through classic spectrophotometric measurements. In its various embodiments, the present invention discloses improvements on the basic concept and apparatus described in the aforementioned United States Patent Application No. 914,265; in particular, the present invention concerning ways of improving the signal-to-background (or noise) ratio such that the data stream is improved. As such, these improvements are important as they allow better standardization and use of the basic invention in circumstances where the more simplified apparatus might not provide meaningful data.

[0025] The basic apparatus such has been described in the aforementioned patent application, which is useful for non-invasive testing of the concentration of a constituent or analyte of interest, e.g., in a mammalian blood stream, has

(1) a light source generating illuminating radiation, preferably infrared radiation, for illuminating a portion of mammalian tissue,

(2) a sample chamber for fixing the portion of the mammalian tissue in a substantially fixed location relative to the light source,

(3) detection means having a plurality, that is, at least 2, preferably at least 3 or 4, detectors, each of the detectors having a separate peak spectral response and an overlap in overall spectral response with at least one other detector. While the detector itself can provide the aforementioned spectral response, preferably the detector has in concert a filter which transmits a portion of the spectrum of illuminating radiation emitted by the light source. Each of these filters has a separate peak transmission response and broad enough transmission response such that there is partial overlap in transmission characteristics with at least one other of the filters. The apparatus also includes analysis means for analyzing the outputs from the detectors to generate a signal indicative of the concentration of

the constituent or analyte or the optical properties of an object.

[0026] In one aspect of the invention, the improvement is in the form of arranging (and manufacturing) the apparatus such that "congruent sampling" is achieved. In congruent sampling, each detector receives the radiation from substantially the same portion of the sample transmitted (or reflected or emitted) in the same direction so that all the rays emerging in all directions from each point of the sample are incident in the same direction on each detector. With congruent sampling, the detectors are superimposable; that is, if a transformation (or translocation) was made from the position of one detector to the position of another detector the identical optical sampling is achieved. Congruent sampling guarantees that the optical beam path from the sample to each detector is both of equal length and of equal angles, thereby eliminating a substantial portion of error caused by viewing from unequal distances or angles. This aspect of the invention is particularly relevant in dealing with inhomogeneous samples, since it minimizes errors due to the inhomogeneity. Further, the use of congruent sampling allows a larger source and a larger illumination area, thus allowing the delivery of the same cumulative power to the detector without using a very small spot. For measurements of a body part, this minimizes discomfort and allows greater source selection flexibility. Congruent sampling, as well as some of the other improvements described herein, also assist in correcting for modifications in response due to temperature or changes in refractive index. These effects may arise in the instrument or the sample itself.

[0027] Preferably, in this and all of the other aspects of the invention, infrared radiation in the 700-2500nm range is used as the illuminating radiation, although wavelengths as low as 500 nm or up to about 10,000 nm may provide meaningful information and are not ruled out. If three detectors are used, the analysis means generates an output which is (or can be) an infrared analog of a location in a colorimetric three dimensional space; if more detectors are used, an output is generated which is an analog of an n-dimensional colorimetric space, where n is equal to, or less than, the number of detectors. One of the detectors that is often used in addition to the plurality of detectors is a black/white luminosity detector which is responsive to and overlaps the spectral response of all of the other detectors. This black/white luminosity detector is used to show the presence and absence of signals as a whole without regard to the specific wavelength. The analysis means can be a computer but preferably is a neural network which mimics the human mind. Neural networks are becoming more sophisticated and the use of this type of network provides a "learning curve" to the system as a whole. If the system is used for concentration testing, a sample chamber is normally required. The sample chamber can hold a mammalian body part such as fingers, ears, hands, foot, toe, wrist, tongue or even the forehead in fixed relation to the detectors. Basically, all that is needed for a non-invasive test measurement using this system is sufficient vascular tissue such that the blood vessel bed can be sampled to sufficient depth in either transmittance or reflectance mode so as to provide meaningful data.

[0028] The apparatus (and methods) are particularly useful in detecting the concentration of a broad family of analytes and constituents found in mammalian blood streams. Obvious choices for applicability of the invention include glucose, glucose indicating constituents (it may be possible to read a constituent that gives an indication of glucose level instead of glucose itself), cholesterol, lipids, hemoglobin and its variants, drugs of abuse and/or drugs of abuse indicating constituents. These drugs of abuse include not just narcotics and hallucinogens but also materials such as alcohol. Any analyte with absorption bands in the response range of the detectors can be used. Further, the apparatus can be used to measure water bands as well as the constituent of interest, thereby facilitating the determination of concentration. The constituent may shift the water bands toward its color which can provide the indicating activity even if the bands of the constituent itself are indistinct; that is, the fractional shift of the water bands may present the sought for information.

[0029] In another aspect, the invention features having at least two detection means or sets of detectors, each of said detection means either viewing a different portion of the sample, e.g., mammalian body or having a different set of filters from the other. Using either of these apparatus variations, one obtains two distinct sets of signals which can be correlated to concentration or the optical properties of the object. By correlating these two signal sets, one can obtain better signal-to-background values, since the alignment (or correlation) of the signals does not necessarily provide alignment of background, thereby smoothing the background and providing better-signal-to-background ratios. A preferred method of achieving this is to have different detection means for each of two fingers, possibly with different sets of filters for each, thereby getting two different sets of data that, however, are correlated to the same analyte concentration. If a single sample is used, the detectors, or most preferably the filters for each of the detection means, should have differing spectral transmission responses. The analysis means obtains an output from a first detection means which is an analog of a location in a colorimetric n-dimensional space, it obtains an output from the second detection means which is an analog of a location in an m-dimensional space, and compares the two outputs to provide a measure of the constituent of interest. Both m and n are equal to or less than the number of detectors in the respective detection means. If two distinct body parts are used, either with or without different filter sets on the separate detection means, there should be at least two sample chambers. Each of said sample chambers must be arranged such that the radiation passing through falls on only one, but not both, of the first and second detection means.

[0030] In still another aspect of the invention, at least one of the filters for the detectors in the detection means can

be replaced by a filter which either has a spectral structure, such as a comb filter, or by a narrow pass filter, which has all of its transmission range overlapped by one of the other filters. A filter having spectral structure such as a comb filter is equivalent to a series of filters, yielding an approximation of more detectors. A sinusoidal filter is a preferred type of comb filter but a sine squared or other filter having spectral structure could be used. The advantage of using this type of filtering unit is that absorption bands for unwanted analytes can be eliminated even if they are in the active area by paralleling the absorption characteristics of the comb filter with those absorption bands, or selecting narrow band filters such that the absorption characteristics of the analytes do not overlap with the transmission characteristics of those filters.

[0031] In still a further aspect of the invention, an interrogation unit or means is included in the apparatus which interrogates the outputs from the detectors in a sufficiently rapid manner so as to allow differentiation of constituents of interest in arterial blood, as opposed to venous or tissue blood. This interrogation means can be the combination of the detection means and the analysis means so long as the electronics provides processing or collection of data which is sufficiently rapid so that the time of the arterial pulse is long compared with the interrogation time. Since the amount of blood in both the veins and tissues is substantially constant, this allows an approximation of the transmission or reflection from tissues and veins as a constant, thereby assisting in differentiating the arterial signal from background. The analysis means can use absolute values for transmission or reflection, or preferably, one can calculate a rate based on the slope of the arterial pulse signals.

[0032] In addition to the multiple variations on the apparatus, there also are corresponding method variations which form various aspects of the invention. For example, the congruent sampling or equal optical beam path/equal angle apparatus forms a method of minimizing the effect of sample inhomogeneity not only with respect to variability over the observed sample surface but also variability in sample transmission as a function of angle. This ensures that each detector in each detection means (or channel) sees only the same view of the same portion of the sample and that the detectors therefore process only color differences since the geometric and inhomogeneity effects are identical in all channels. The other methods provide similar advantages. Preferably, some combination of the apparatus described previously can be used; for example, two different body parts may be used with separate detector units and the processing should be sufficiently fast that an arterial pulse is seen by each of the detection filter units. This again minimizes the background level. An FTIR instrument could also be used to practice the methods of the invention if its orthogonal Fourier filters are replaced by a filter set such as is previously described and directing the outputs of these new filter functions to a unit which performs this described processing.

[0033] Other aspects and features of the invention will be more readily apparent from the following description and the drawing.

Brief Description of the Drawing

[0034]

Figure 1 shows the CIE 1931 chromaticity plot, shown in standard spectral tristimulus values (Figure 1a) and normalized form (Fig. 1b);

Figure 2 is a three dimensional plot of color in terms of hue, chroma and value;

Figures 3a-b show computer models of water and sugar peaks plotted as absorbance versus wavelength; and

Figure 3c shows the composite transmission spectrum of a glucose solution;

Figures 4a and 4b are plots of relative spectral response versus wavelength for two different filter sets, one having four different filters and the other with six different filters;

Figures 5a and b are two parallel embodiments of the invention showing a method of providing detectors which all view the same portion of the sample at the same optical beam path through the same solid angle, with Figure 5b having a sufficient number of detectors to parallel the two detector means embodiment of Figure 8;

Figure 6 is a schematic illustration of the device using a fiber optic bundle to provide equal distance and equal angle to the detectors;

Figure 7 is a detail of the fiber optic cable at a line 1-1 from Figure 6;

Figure 8 shows an embodiment of the invention having two sample chambers and two detection means;

Figure 9 shows the transmittance of a "comb" filter useful in another embodiment of the invention;

Figure 10 shows pulse data taken from an instrument using the principles of another embodiment of the invention; and

Figure 11 is rate data using the same data and apparatus as is used in Figure 10.

Detailed Description of the Invention

[0035] The present invention provides improved non-invasive procedures for measuring the concentration of a con-

stituent of interest that has absorbance, emittance, or reflectance bands in a selected region of the electromagnetic spectrum, preferably 500-10,000 nm, most preferably 700-2500 nm. This invention can be used to determine optical properties of a sample or object in addition to making concentration measurements. The apparatus and methods are improvements to the basic concept described in United States Patent Application No. 914,265. The apparatus and methods of the prior application are based, in part, on the recognition that present problems associated with non-invasive concentration measurements that use radiation as a probe relate to the type of information that is obtained, e.g., from spectrophotometers, rather than the processing of the information itself

[0036] Although using different analysis techniques can clarify what information has been obtained, these analysis techniques cannot generate results better than the underlying information obtained. By applying an analog of color perception to concentration measurements, particularly forming a near infrared parallel of the three different pigments of the cones of the retina, significantly better information relating to concentration can be obtained. Since in color perception "color constancy" is maintained under extreme variations in illumination, the use of neural networks or digital computation to process information in a manner more similar to the information processing of the eye-brain is preferred. Color constancy is the capacity to successfully recover the reflected, emitted, or transmitted color of an object regardless of the composition or intensity of the ambient illuminating radiation. A further description of color constancy is found in Dufort and Lumsden, "Color categorization and color constancy in a neural network model of V4", *Biol. Cybern.* **65**, 293-303(1991).

[0037] The improvements herein to the basic invention set forth in United States Patent Application Serial No. 914,265 concern improved means of obtaining data such that the signal desired is maximized and the background signal (or noise) is minimized. Each of the embodiments described herein provide alternate means to achieve this same advantage. In fact, a preferred apparatus could have a combination of several of these embodiments used in concert.

[0038] Figures 1 and 2 show different ways of handling data in classic instrumental colorimetry. Figure 1a shows the CIE 1931 standard color matching functions, which approximate the spectral response of the three types of cones in the human retina. Figure 1b, a so-called chromaticity plot, is a convenient two dimensional representation of the systematic variation of this standard observer to monochromatic light of different wavelengths. Each point on the continuous curve in Figure 1b is plotted as a normalized (X, Y) pair, where the values are obtained from the three response curves in Figure 1a by dividing by the sum of all three response, according to the formulas:

$$D = x' + y' + z' \quad X = x'/D \quad Y = y'/D \quad Z = z'/D$$

[0039] This normalization lead to the result $X+Y+Z=1$ and completely defines the relative values of X, Y, and Z. Accordingly, specification of X and Y on the two dimensional plot in Figure 1b is sufficient to specify Z as well. Monochromatic light passes at the indicated points along the horseshoe shaped curve in Figure 1b and with this normalization, pure monochromatic light falls at the same point along the curve irrespective of its intensity or brightness so the intensity (nominally D) must be specified separately. White light (of any intensity) falls at the point $X=0.307$ $Y=0.314$ (the point designated WL on Figure 1b).

[0040] The light received from real objects, which is not monochromatic, fall at points within the interior of the curve. The hue or dominant "color" of such real objects is defined as the perceived color of the monochromatic light which lies at the intersection of the outer horseshoe-shaped curve with a line from the white light point (WL) through the object's location on the plot. Line WL-R is an example of this type of line and point R shows the "hue". The saturation, or chroma, of the light is a measure of how far along the line from "white" to "pure" color the object's location is found.

[0041] The hue-chroma coordinate system in Figure 1b is irregular, however, in that the length of the vector from the center to the outer curve changes significantly with wavelength. Figure 2 is an alternative, cylindrical coordinate system in which the hue is defined by the angular rotation from an arbitrarily chosen green-red axis, and the chroma is defined as the radial distance from the center. Here the density, or value of the light is explicitly included as the third cylindrical coordinate. The AB plane in Figure 2 is equivalent to the XY plane in Figure 1b.

[0042] In classic instrumental colorimetry, only the color was sought, so that the relative direction of the vector in the three dimensional space was what was important, not the amplitude. When used for color comparison, the tristimulus system outlined in conjunction with Figure 1 reduces the dimensionality of the vector space from three to two through the use of normalization. It should be noted, however, that this self-normalized approach introduces a degree of linearization for incremental color changes which alter the three components of the xyz vector by relatively small amounts, particularly when the changes are nearly perpendicular to the starting vector itself.

[0043] These instrumental tristimulus systems do not, however, perform color vision, but rather are intended to characterize colors so they can be duplicated reliably. In particular, these systems are quite sensitive to changes in the illuminant spectrum and, hence, are not duplicating the color constancy features of mammalian color vision.

[0044] The present invention sets up an analog of visual color perception using N detectors which can form a partially degenerate N-dimensional vector space. The dimensionality is preferably reduced by at least one because the vector is normalized, and perhaps by more than one because the detector curves overlap strongly so that the resultant detec-

tor signals are partially correlated. Many different normalizations, such as the sum of one or more of the N signals or the length of the vector, may be used. The resultant vector space is used to characterize a higher dimensional analog of hue and chroma to quantify the amount of the "color" of glucose in the observed specimen.

[0045] Figure 3 is a series of computer-generated simulations of the absorbance spectrum of water and sugar in the 700-1200 nm range. The locations, magnitudes, and widths of the peaks shown are taken from a variety of sources in the literature. The three indicated peaks near 1000, 920, and 840 nm appear together, for example, in the work of Koashi et al. described in US Patent 4,883,953, superimposed on a broad background offset. Interpretation of such reported results requires care to separate glucose spectral features from instrumental artifacts. The difficulty in obtaining reliable glucose spectra is well-known, and follows from the small magnitude of the absorption by glucose in this spectral range and from the fact that the water content and refractive index of solutions change when glucose is added. The instrumentally observed changes in detector signals in this spectral range are a mixture of increased absorbance from glucose, decreased absorbance due to the displaced water and changes in instrumental throughput due to refractive index and temperature variations during the experiments. The final result for the glucose spectrum itself is highly dependent on the accuracy of the corrections for these effects. Nevertheless, the general features shown in Figure 3 emerge as suitably descriptive to guide the selection of detector response functions to implement the present invention.

[0046] The peak (WOH) shown in Figure 3a at 960 nm is attributed to absorption by the OH group in water. The glucose peak (GOH) near 1000 nm in Figure 3b is also attributed to OH absorption, with its location shifted to higher wavelength as a result of local field distortions at the OH sites on the glucose due to the other atoms on the molecule. The size of the glucose peak can be readily estimated on the assumption that there is no loss of total absorbance, but only a shift. Thus, pure water is roughly 56 molar; glucose at 1 gram/dl (=10 grams/liter) and a molecular weight of 180 is roughly $10/180 = 0.056$ molar, 1000 times smaller than pure water. Each molecule of glucose, however, carries 5 OH groups; hence the glucose is roughly 0.28 molar in OH groups, and should have an absorbance about 200 times smaller than pure water. Scaling from Figure 3a, the expected magnitude of the shifted OH peak from glucose is thus of the order of 0.001 absorbance units.

[0047] The peaks shown in Figure 3b near 920 nm (CCH) is attributed to the stretch mode of the CH bonds in glucose. Its magnitude relative to the shifted OH peak (GOH) in Figure 3b is taken coarsely from the data presented by Koashi, as is the smaller peak at 840nm. These three peaks are consistent with the spectral correlation plots presented by Rosenthal in US Patent 5,028,787, which also indicate the possible presence of another slight peak in the 750 nm range, which has not been included in Figure 3b.

[0048] Figure 3b also includes an estimate of the relative size of the absorbance of the water displaced by glucose at 1 gram/dl concentration. This was obtained from Figure 3a using the tabulated specific gravity of 1.0039 (ref. Handbook of Chemistry and Physics) for such a glucose solution. Thus, if 1 gram of glucose is added to 99 grams of water, the result is 100 grams of solution filling $100/1.0039 = 99.61$ ml. A full deciliter of this solution then contains 99.39 grams of water (and 1.0039 grams of glucose). By comparison a full deciliter of pure water would contain 100 grams of water. Thus the change to approximately 1 gram/dl concentration of glucose reduces the water content of the solution by 0.61 grams; the magnitude of the absorbance of this displaced water is about $100/0.61$ or about 164 times smaller than that of pure water.

[0049] Figure 3c shows the calculated impact of these broad and shall glucose features on the transmission spectrum of four centimeters of water. Note that the glucose concentration has been increased to 10 grams/dl to render the difference between the curves visible. The major impact of the glucose absorbance is to change the apparent shape of the 960 nm water band (WOH). The total change is slight: at the clinically significant range of 0.05-0.5 grams/dl, the changes would fall within the width of the line on the full scale plot in Figure 3c.

[0050] The need to detect and quantify such small changes in the presence of other changes in the band shape due to temperature effects and the impact of other constituents of the fluid which may also alter the shape place a premium on making optimal use of the entire signal change due to glucose, i.e., by integrating the full change with different weights on a plurality of overlapping detectors. The information in Figure 3 may make it possible to "tune" the filters to emphasize the CH stretch and shifted OH band contribution, and diminish that from the unshifted OH band contribution, in one or more detectors, while doing the reverse in other detectors.

[0051] Figure 4a shows one set of filters which could be used with the invention. Each of the four response curves is a composite of the spectral response of the silicon detector (HAMMATSU S2387 Series) and the transmission of at least one 3mm thick Schott glass filter. If a pair of filters is used (as in filter sets A, B and C), the filters are in series. In each of case A, B and C, the first illuminated filter in the pair is a long-pass filter whose transmission rises with increasing wavelength (RG9, RG780, RG850, respectively). The second filter, made of KG2 glass, acts as a short-pass filter whose transmission falls with increasing wavelength. For the D detector, a single filter such as a RG1000 filter is used and the decrease in response at the highest wavelengths is produced by the spectral response of the silicon detector itself.

[0052] As can be seen from this figure, each of the filters has a separate peak transmittance range, and overlaps with the response of the others. In particular, the A, C, and D filters comprise a trio which implements an approximate trans-

lation of the cone response curves from the visible into the near infrared, as described in United States Patent Application No. 914,265

[0053] However, the filter set in Figure 4a is not an efficient match to the spectra of glucose and water, because a large portion of the response is concentrated in the short wavelength region where these constituents are least absorbing. Figure 4b shows an alternative set of filters which could increase the percentage impact of the various bands in Figure 3 on the total signal in each detector. This shows overlapping broad-band interference filters which are commercially available from the Corion Corporation (their P70 series) to bracket the 960 nm water peak so as to enhance the size and uniqueness of the signal changes which result from changing glucose concentration.

[0054] It is also possible to create filters with multiple passbands so that, for example, the H and J filters in Figure 4b could be combined into a single composite passband. Similarly, a comb or sinusoidal filter, as shown in Figure 9, could be used to integrate the signal from all three of the glucose peaks in Figure 3, with a similar but spectrally displaced filter being used to de-emphasize the spectral regions which contain the glucose features. The width, shape, and amplitude of each lobe of the comb, and the number of lobes in each set, can be adjusted to optimize the separation of signal and background. To achieve the desired self-consistent normalization of the signals, each detector signal could be divided, for example, (i) by the vector length calculated from all of the signals together, (ii) by the simple sum of all of the signals, (iii) by the signal observed through a single broadband filter which overlapped most of the spectral range covered by the full set, or even (iv) by the signal observed in a narrow band filter placed at an appropriate location within the range. Such normalization techniques and related ones are well known in the art of data processing, and are not restricted to the one delineated above; the important quality is that the filter response curves overlap, and be matched in width and location to the broad and shallow spectral features of the analyte of interest.

[0055] Figures 5 and 6 both show attempts to cure one of the problems associated with any type of radiation measurement, the inhomogeneity derived from physical differences in the view of the detectors relative to the sample. With any physical object, particularly something as inhomogeneous as mammalian body part, if the optical beam paths from the sample to the detector, and the solid angles over which they operate, are not equal, the device itself may cause an unwanted error (or at least a reduced signal-to-background response). The basic concept of the devices illustrated by these Figures is that the detectors collect light leaving points at the entrance aperture congruently. "Congruent," as used herein, means that the light collection efficiency at each point in the extended object being viewed, relative to the other points in the object, is the same for each detector. In other words, the images for each detector should be fully superimposable, so that, they cover the exact same solid angle at the same distance. The device illustrated in Figure 5 achieves this by using a series of beam splitters to make the optical beam path such that the detectors all receive the same signal at the same distance and same angle. The device of Figure 5 has a lamp 10 which generates the illuminating radiation, preferably infrared radiation in the 700-2500 nm range. The light from this lamp 10 is focused by a launch lens 20 through an aperture 30. Aperture 30 leads to a sample chamber 40, which is shown having a portion of the finger 45 therein. Radiation transmitted through finger 45 goes through entrance aperture 52 in detection means 50. Because the size of transmitted signals is lower, reflectance measurements may be advantageous but reflectance can have other associated problems with stray radiation. Further, although a mammalian body part is preferred, any sample could be used. Detection means 50 has a series of beam splitters 60, 62 and 64 which split the light entering through entrance aperture 52 and send it to four detectors 72, 74, 76 and 78. Each of detectors 72, 74, 76 and 78 may have an associated filter 82, 84, 86 and 88, respectively. These detectors and their associated filters, which will be described in more detail below, all have different peak transmittance responses. Normally, they also have sufficiently broad transmittance response such that each detector has some overlapping spectrum of transmittance with at least one other detector.

[0056] The outputs from detectors 72, 74, 76 and 78 go to an analysis means, such as a computer or neural network (not shown), which provides data processing and generates a signal indicative of the concentration of the constituent of interest.

[0057] Figure 5b shows a parallel device but with eight rather than four detectors and associated filters. This system could provide more accurate information by using more detectors and can be used in lieu of the two sample chamber/eight detector device shown in Figure 8. For certain samples, segregating the data into two sets, each of four detectors, improved data can be obtained compared to a single detector set.

[0058] Figure 6 illustrates another variation of the apparatus that provides substantially equal optical beam paths over the same solid angle. In this embodiment, lamp 10' and launch lens 20' can be identical to lamp 10 and 20 in embodiment of Figure 5. In place of the entrance aperture to the sample chamber 30, a fiber optic cable 30' is used. Fiber optic cable 30' can either be a single fiber optic line or could be a fiber optic bundle such as is described later in conjunction with Figure 7. Fiber optic cable 30' delivers the illuminating radiation, preferably infrared radiation in the 700-2500nm range, to finger 45' is located. Although a finger is used in each of the Figures as a mammalian body part, other body parts including the forehead, toes, hands, feet, ears or wrist could be used, or a different type of sample could be used.

[0059] At the exit of sample chamber 40', the light transmitted through a fiber optic bundle 52' which takes the place of entrance aperture 52. The light is transmitted to detection means 50 through a fiber optic cable 52' which is bifurcated

into four optic cables, 62', 64', 66' and 68'. The bifurcated fiber optic cable take the place of beam splitters 60, 62 and 64. Each of these fiber optic cables 62', 64', 66' and 68', lead to filters 82', 84', 86', and 88' which then transmit radiation to detectors 72', 74', 76' and 78'. The detectors and filters can be identical to those shown in Figure 5.

[0060] The critical aspect of the device shown in Figure 6 is the exit fiber optic cable bundle 52'. Figure 7 shows a detail of this fiber optic cable bundle. Figure 7 is a cross section of fiber optic bundle 52' through the line 1-1 prime on Figure 6. As can be seen, this fiber optic bundle 52' contains many small fibers from the four output legs, 62', 64', 66', 68', intertwined so that they effectively sample each point at the input substantially equally. As shown in the Figure, all of the fibers having the number 1 go to bifurcated fiber optic cable 62', those having the number 2 go to fiber optic cable 64', those having the number 3 go to fiber optic cable 66', and those having the number 4 go to fiber optic cable 68'. While this is not exactly equivalent to the beam splitter arrangement Figure 5 since the fibers do not exactly overlay each other, it is a very good first order of approximation if there are sufficient fibers, and the fibers are sufficiently small such that the mix of fibers about the cable is substantially random and equal.

[0061] Figure 8 illustrates another embodiment of the invention, one whereby two distinct n-dimensional spaces (or an n-dimensional space and an m-dimensional space) are generated and compared to yield an improved signal. In the embodiment shown, lamp 10" is used to provide the illuminating radiation which then goes to two mirrors 15" and 16" and onto a pair of launch lens 20". Each of entrance apertures 30", sample chambers 40", exit aperture 52" and detector means 50" are identical, both to that shown in Figure 5 and to each other. However, in one sub-embodiment, the filters 82", 84", 86", and 88" in the two detection means 50" are different yielding different n (or m) dimensional spaces. If these filters are different in that they have different peak transmittance, a different n (e.g., 3) dimensional space is generated. Each detector means generates a signal indicative of the concentration of the material of interest such as glucose and the two values can be compared by the analysis means to eliminate some of the contribution of background. One means of doing this is to generate a vector such as previously described, align the vectors, and add them which should give a higher vector amplitude in a single direction. Since the background components should not align, this yields better separation of signal and background. In the illustrated embodiment, two separate sample chambers 40" are shown. These sample chambers could be used for different body parts, such as two fingers, and a value generated even if the filter sets 82", 84", 86" and 88" are identical. Since the glucose values in the blood should be the same but the background values between the fingers are likely be different, this will promote differentiation of signal-from-background. In another aspect of this embodiment of the invention, a single sample chamber could be used but a beam splitter is placed near the exit aperture 52" from the sample chamber 40" such that the exiting transmitted radiation (or reflected radiation if that format is used) goes to two parallel detection means 50". By using different filter sets 82", 84", 86" and 88" on these two detection means 50" with the same input signal to the filters, two different n-dimensional (or an n-dimensional and m-dimensional) spaces are generated and the same advantages as previously described are obtained.

[0062] Figure 9 shows the transmittance of a comb filter which could be used as one of the filters in a detection means in various aspects of the invention. This filter has a spectral structure such that it absorbs at certain wavelengths and transmits at other wavelengths. By aligning the absorbance bands of the filter with known bands of background constituents which are to be eliminated, e.g., water bands, one can obtain a more highly differentiated data stream. In place of the comb filter or other filter having a spectral structure, a single filter (or multiple filters) having a single, narrow transmittance peak which is overlapping with at least one of the other filters, could be used.

[0063] Figure 10 shows actual arterial pulse data with an early form of the instrument described herein. The electronics of the instrument are such that one can collect data over a hundred times per second, much faster than the pulse rate. Accordingly, individual pulses can be shown on an absorbance versus time graph. In Figure 10, each of subfigures 10A-10D show signal output voltages in volts versus time in milliseconds. Each of the four Figures, 10A-10D, are made using the same type of photocells, silicon photocells, with different filter sets, specifically those with the response shown in Fig. 4a. Similarly, different photocells such as a mixture of silicon, lead sulfide and lead selenide cells could be used. The classic notch in the pulse wave form is seen in the figure. What is interesting is that the four different filters not only transmit different amounts of light (based on the transmittance of light of particular frequency), but also that the ratios of peak to trough voltages are different for each different detector. Using this type of information, a value of concentration can be obtained for the constituent of interest.

[0064] Figure 11 uses the same data as Figure 10 but plots it as a normalized rate rather than an absolute voltage value. The Y axis shows a percent change per second by plotting average slope across a unit time divided by the average value across a sliding sampling window in time, while the X axis gives time in milliseconds. The actual rate is inverted here but as is seen from Figures 11A-11D, the rate is different in each detector. Since these type of rate calculations have been used previously in pulse oximetry to provide information (albeit at limited wavelengths without overlap as the present case), a parallel can be made between the present invention and the rate calculations of pulse oximetry which are particularly useful. In fact, this type of arterial pulse processing can be used with any of the embodiments of the invention and it is particularly useful in conjunction with the dual sample chamber (e.g., two finger) method because the arterial components in each finger will correlate strongly. Similarly, it is believed that transmittance and reflectance

changes from the arterial pulse will improve results using the present methods and apparatus. By using only the arterial pulse, much of the background can be eliminated and more meaningful data may be generated.

[0065] Those skilled in the art may appreciate the other advantages and uses of the subject matter disclosed herein. Such other advantages, uses and embodiments of the apparatus and methods described herein are included in the following claims.

Claims

1. An apparatus for determining the optical properties of an object, such as a sample or fluorescent object, having:

a radiation source (10) generating a spectrum of illuminating radiation for illuminating a portion of said object (45);
 detection means (50) having a plurality of detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) adapted to generate an output, each of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) having a spectral response in a portion of said spectrum of illuminating radiation emitted by said radiation source (10), each of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) having a separate peak spectral response and at least a partial overlap in spectral response characteristics with that of at least one other of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78); and
 analysis means arranged to analyze said outputs from the detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) to generate a signal indicative of the optical properties of said object (45), and
 characterised by:
 said apparatus being constructed such that each of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) is located such that it congruently samples the radiation from said object (45), whereby with congruent sampling, the detectors are superimposable, that is, if a translocation was made from the position of one detector to the position of another detector the identical optical sampling is achieved.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein

said detection means (50), includes a first detection means (50") adapted to receive radiation transmitted or reflected from a first sample portion of said object (45), said first detection means (50") generating a first data stream formed of a composite of a data signal component indicative of said optical properties of said object (45) and a background component, and a second detection means (50") adapted to receive radiation transmitted or reflected from a first sample portion, said second detector means (50") generating a second data stream formed of a composite of a data signal component indicative of said optical properties of said object (45) and a background component; and
 said analysis means includes means adapted for comparing said first data stream with said second data main in order to generate an information signal indicative of the optical properties of said object (45) while rendering the interfering features of the background from said first data stream and said second data stream to be less distinct than the background is in either data stream individually.

3. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein;

each of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) having a filter (82, 84, 86, 88) which transmits or reflects a portion of the spectrum of illuminating radiation emitted by said radiation source (10), each of said filters (82, 84, 86, 88) having a separate peak transmittance or reflection response and at least a partial overlap in transmittance or reflectance characteristics with at least one other of said filters (82, 84, 86, 88), and at least one of said filters (82, 84, 86, 88) in said detection means being selected from the group consisting of filters (82, 84, 86, 88) having spectral structure such that it has absorbance bands in the portion of the spectrum over which it transmits or reflects radiation, and filters (82, 84, 86, 88) which have only a single narrow transmittance or reflectance range.

4. The apparatus of any preceding claim and for determining the optical properties of an object (such as a sample or fluorescent object) wherein

an object chamber (40) for fixing said object (45) in a substantially fixed location relative to said radiation source (10);
 analysis means is arranged to analyze the outputs from the detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) to generate a data signal component indicative of a concentration of said constituent; and
 interrogation means arranged to collect the outputs from said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) in sufficiently rapid

manner to observe a distinct arterial pulse wave form so to allow differentiation of said constituents of interest in arterial blood, as opposed to venous or tissue blood, in said object (45).

- 5 5. The apparatus of claims 1, 2, 3 or 4, wherein said object (45) is a sample and further comprising at least one sample chamber (40) for fixing said portion of said sample (45) in substantially fixed location relative to said radiation source (10), and wherein the optical properties are representative of a concentration of a constituent of interest in said sample, and, optionally, wherein

10 said sample (45) comprises a portion of a human body, or
said constituent of interest is selected from the group consisting of glucose, glucose indicating constituents, cholesterol, lipids, proteins, hemoglobin and its variants, drugs of abuse and drugs of abuse indicating constituents

- 15 6. The apparatus of claim 1, 2, 3, or 4, wherein either:

a) said illuminating radiation comprises infrared radiation in the 700-2500 nm range; or
b) said analysis means generates an output which is an analog of a location in a colorimetric n-dimensional space, a being equal to, or less than, the number of detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) in said detection means; or
c) said detector means (50) further comprises a black/white luminosity detector which is responsive to and overlaps said spectral response of all of said plurality of detectors; or
20 d) each of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) comprises a filter (82, 84, 86, 88) which transmits or reflects a portion of said spectrum of illuminating radiation, each of said filters (82, 84, 86, 88) having a separate peak transmittance or absorbance response different from the peak transmittance or reflectance responses of the other filters (82, 84, 86, 88) of said detection means (50) and at least a partial overlap in transmittance or reflectance response with at least one other of said filters (82, 84, 86, 88); or
25 e) said analysis means comprises a neural network.

7. The apparatus of claim 1 comprising:

30 a) beam splitting means (60, 62, 64) to allow said plurality of detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) to be arranged to achieve congruent sampling; or
b) a fiber optic cable bundles (62', 64', 66', 68') containing a plurality of optical fibers to allow said plurality of detectors (72', 74', 76', 78') to be arranged to achieve congruent sampling.

- 35 8. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein either:

a) each of said detectors (72", 74", 76", 78") comprises a filter (82", 84", 86", 88") which transmits or reflects a portion of said spectrum of illuminating radiation, each of said filters having a peak transmittance or reflectance response different from the peak transmittance or reflectance responses of the other filters of said detection means (50) and at least a partial overlap in transmittance or absorbance response with at least one other filter, said first detection means (50") having a first set of filters and said second detection means (50") having a second set of filters, and said first and second sets of filters (82", 84", 86", 88") having differing transmittance or reflectance responses; or
40 b) said analysis means generates an analog of a location in a colorimetric n-dimensional space from said first data stream, where n is equal to or less than, the number of detectors in each of said first detection means (50"); an analog of a location in a colorimetric m-dimensional space from said second data stream, where m is equal to or less than, the number of detectors in said second detection means (50"); and compares said locations to generate said data signal indicative of the optical properties of said object (45); or
45 c) each of said detectors (72", 74", 76", 78") has a filter (82", 84", 86", 88") with a peak spectral response different from the peak spectral responses of the other filters (82, 84, 86, 88) of said detection means (50) and at least a partial overlap in spectral response with at least one other filter, said first detection means (50") having a first set of filters (82", 84", 86", 88") and said second detection means (50") having a second set of filters (82", 84", 86", 88"), and said first and second sets of filters (50") having differing spectral transmittance or reflectance responses.
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- 55 9. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein said spectral structure of said filter (82, 84, 86, 88) is in the form of a sinusoidal transmittance or reflectance structure.

10. The apparatus of claim 5 wherein:

said apparatus comprises at least two sample chambers (40"), each of said sample chambers (40") being arranged such that radiation passing there through falls on only one, but not both, of said first and second detection means (50"); and, optionally; each of said sample chambers (40") has a detection means (50") associated therewith, each of said individual detection means (50") having its own set of filters (82", 84", 86", 88") associated therewith.

11. A method for determining the concentration of a constituent of interest in a sample (45) comprising the steps of:

fixing a portion of said sample (45) of interest in a position such that it can be illuminated with a spectrum of radiation from a radiation source (10);
illuminating said portion of said sample of interest with said spectrum of radiation from said radiation source (10);
detecting radiation transmitted or reflected from said sample (45), said detection being carried out by detection means (50) containing a plurality of individual detectors (72, 74, 76, 78), each of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) having a peak spectral response distinct from the peak spectral response any other of said detectors, said detectors each having overlap in spectral response with at least one of said other detectors, each of said detectors being located relative to said fixed portion of said sample (45) such that each of said detectors provides congruent sampling with the others of said detectors whereby with congruent sampling, the detectors are superimposable, that is, if a translocation was made from the position of one detector to the position of another detector the identical optical sampling is achieved;
generating a data stream corresponding to said detected radiation from each of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78); and
analyzing said data streams to obtain a measure of concentration.

12. The method claim 11 wherein:

in said detecting step, said detection being carried out by at least a first detection means (50") and a second detection means (50") each containing a plurality of individual detectors (72", 74", 76", 78"), each of said detectors having a peak spectral response distinct from the peak spectral response any other of said detectors (72", 74", 76", 78") in the same detection means (50"), said detectors (72", 74", 76", 78") having an overlap in spectral response with at least one of said other detectors in said same detection means (50"),
in said generating step, said first detection means (50") generates a first data stream formed of a composite of a data signal component indicative of said concentration of said constituent and a background component and said second detection means (50") generates a second data stream formed of a composite of a data signal component indicative of said concentration of said constituent and a background component; and
in said analyzing step, comparing said first data stream with said second data stream in order to generate an information signal indicative of the concentration of said constituent while rendering the interfering features of the background from said first and second data streams to be less distinct than the background in either data stream individually.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein:

in said detecting step, said detection being carried out by detection means (50) containing a plurality of individual detectors (72, 74, 76, 78), each of said detectors having an associated filter (82, 84, 86, 88) which has a peak transmittance or reflectance distinct from the peak transmittance or reflectance any other of said filters (82, 84, 86, 88), said filters each having overlap in transmittance or reflectance characteristics with at least one of said other filters (82, 84, 86, 88), at least one of said filters being selected from the group consisting of filters (82, 84, 86, 88) having a spectral response such that it has reflectance or transmittance bands in the portion of the spectrum over which it transmits or reflects radiation, and filters (82, 84, 86, 88) which have only a narrow transmittance or reflectance range.

14. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of:

collecting outputs from each of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) using an interrogation means which has a sufficiently rapid response to observe a distinct arterial pulse such that the data collected can be correlated to arterial blood levels of said constituent of interest.

15. The method of claim 11, 12, 13 or 14 wherein either;

- a) each of said detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) further comprise an associated filter (82, 84, 86, 88), each of said associated filters having a peak transmittance or reflectance distinct from the peak transmittance or reflectance of any of the other of said filters (82, 84, 86, 88), each of said filters (82, 84, 86, 88) having an overlap in spectral response with at least one other of said filters; or
- b) said spectrum of illuminating radiation comprises infrared radiation in the 700-2500 nm range; or
- c) said analysis step comprises forming an analog of a specific position in an n-dimensional colorimetric space from said data stream, n being equal to, or less than, the number of detectors in said detection means (50); or
- d) said analysis step is carried out by a neural network, in which case, optionally, wherein said neural network is calibrated and trained to process said data streams to achieve an analog of color constancy in vision; or
- e) said constituent of interest is selected from the group consisting of glucose, glucose indicating constituents, cholesterol, lipids, proteins, hemoglobin and its variants, drugs of abuse, and drugs of abuse indicating constituents; or
- f) said analysis step comprises forming an analog of a specific position in an n-dimensional colorimetric space from said signals, where n is equal to, or less than, the number of detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) in said detection means (50).

16. The method of claim 11 comprising either:

- a) beam splitting means (62, 64, 66) to allow said plurality of detectors (72, 74, 76, 78) to be arranged to achieve congruent sampling; or
- b) a fiber optic cable bundles (62', 64', 66', 68') containing a plurality of optical fibers to allow said plurality of detectors (72', 74', 76', 78') to be arranged to achieve congruent sampling.

17. The method of claim 12, wherein said analysis step comprises forming at least two distinct analogs of specific positions in distinct colorimetric spaces from said signals, an n-dimensional space from said first detection means (50") where n is equal to, or less than, the number of detectors in said first detection means (50"), and an m-dimensional space from said second detection means (50"), where m is equal to, or less than, the number of detectors (72", 74", 76", 78") in said second detection means (50"), and correlating said analog positions for said first and second detection means (50").

18. The method of claim 14 wherein said detection means (50") comprises a plurality of detection means (72", 74", 76", 78"), each of said detection means having filters (82, 84, 86, 88) associated therewith to generate a distinct signal from any other of said detection means (50"), and wherein said analysis of said signals comprises comparing said signals obtained from each of said detector means (50").

Patentansprüche

1. Vorrichtung zur Ermittlung optischer Eigenschaften eines Objektes, wie z. B. einer Probe oder eines fluoreszierenden Objektes, mit

einer Strahlungsquelle (10) zur Erzeugung eines Spektrums einer illuminierenden Strahlung zur Beleuchtung eines Teiles des Objekts (45);

einer Detektionseinrichtung (50) mit einer Vielzahl von Detektoren (72,74,76,78), die derart ausgebildet sind, daß sie eine Ausgabe erzeugen, wobei jeder Detektor (72,74,76,78) eine Spektralempfindlichkeit in einem Teil des Spektrums der von der Strahlungsquelle (10) emittierten illuminierenden Strahlung hat, wobei jeder der Detektoren (72,74,76,78) eine separate Peak-Spektralempfindlichkeit und zumindest eine teilweise Überschneidung der Spektralempfindlichkeits-Charakteristik mit zumindest einer der anderen Detektoren (72,74,76,78) hat;

eine Analyseeinrichtung, die derart angeordnet ist, daß sie die Ausgaben von den Detektoren (72,74,76,78) analysiert, um ein Signal zu erzeugen, das auf die optischen Eigenschaften des Objektes (45) hinweist, und dadurch gekennzeichnet ist, daß die Vorrichtung derart ausgebildet ist, daß jeder Detektor (72,74,76,78) derart angeordnet ist, daß er die Strahlung von dem Objekt (45) übereinstimmend abtastet, wobei die Detektoren (72,74,76,78) durch die übereinstimmende Probenahme überlagerbar sind, d. h., wenn eine Versetzung eines Detektors von seiner Position auf die Position eines anderen Detektors durchgeführt wird, wird eine iden-

tische optische Probennahme erzielt.

2. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, bei der

5 die Detektionseinrichtung (50) ein erstes Detektionsmittel (50'), das derart ausgebildet ist, daß es die von einem ersten Probenteil des Objekts (45) übertragene oder reflektierte Strahlung empfängt, wobei das erste Detektionsmittel (50') einen ersten Datenstrom erzeugt, der von einer Zusammensetzung einer auf die optischen Eigenschaften des Objekts (45) hinweisenden Datensignalkomponente und einer Hintergrundkomponente gebildet wird, und ein zweites Detektionsmittel (50'') umfaßt, das derart ausgebildet ist, daß es die von
10 einem ersten Probenteil übertragene oder reflektierte Strahlung empfängt, wobei das zweite Detektionsmittel (50'') einen zweiten Datenstrom erzeugt, der von einer Zusammensetzung einer auf die optischen Eigenschaften des Objekts (45) hinweisenden Datensignalkomponente und einer Hintergrundkomponente gebildet wird, und

15 die Analyseeinrichtung Mittel aufweist, die derart ausgebildet sind, daß sie den ersten Datenstrom mit dem zweiten Datenstrom vergleichen, um ein auf die optischen Eigenschaften des Objekts (45) hinweisendes Informationssignal zu erzeugen, während die sich überlagernden Merkmale des Hintergrunds aus dem ersten Datenstrom und dem zweiten Datenstrom derart wiedergegeben werden, daß sie weniger stark ausgeprägt sind als es der Hintergrund in jedem einzelnen Datenstrom ist.

3. Vorrichtung nach einem der Ansprüche 1 oder 2, bei der

20 jeder der Detektoren (72,74,76,78) einen Filter (82,84,86,88) aufweist, der einen Teil des Spektrums der durch die Strahlungsquelle (10) emittierten illuminierenden Strahlung überträgt oder reflektiert, wobei jeder Filter (82,84,86,88) eine separate Peak-Übertragungs- oder Reflexionsempfindlichkeit und zumindest eine teilweise Überschneidung bezüglich der Übertragungs- oder Reflexions-Charakteristik mit zumindest einem der anderen Filter (82,84,86,88) aufweist, und wobei zumindest einer der Filter (82,84,86,88) in der Detektionseinrichtung aus einer Gruppe von Filtern (82,84,86,88) ausgewählt ist, die eine spektrale Struktur aufweisen, so daß
25 dieser Absorptionsbänder in dem Teil des Spektrums aufweist, über den er die Strahlung überträgt oder reflektiert, und Filter (82,84,86,88), die lediglich einen engen Übertragungs- oder Reflexionsbereich haben.

4. Vorrichtung nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3 und zur Ermittlung der optischen Eigenschaften eines Objekts (wie z. B. einer Probe oder eines fluoreszierenden Objekts), bei der

35 ein Objektraum (40) zum Befestigen des Objekts (45) an einer im wesentlichen relativ zu der Strahlungsquelle (10) festen Stelle;

die Analyseeinrichtung derart angeordnet ist, daß sie die Ausgaben von den Detektoren (72,74,76,78) analysiert, um eine Datensignalkomponente zu erzeugen, die auf die Konzentration des Bestandteiles hinweist; und

40 eine Abfrageeinrichtung derart angeordnet ist, daß sie die Ausgaben von den Detektoren (72,74,76,78) in ausreichend schneller Weise sammelt, um eine deutliche arterielle Pulswellenform zu überwachen, so daß eine Unterscheidung der interessierenden Bestandteile im arteriellen Blut im Gegensatz zum venösen oder Gewebeblut in dem Objekt (45) möglich ist.

5. Vorrichtung nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, bei der das Objekt (45) eine Probe ist und die ferner zumindest eine Probenkammer (40) zum Befestigen des Teiles der Probe (45) an einer im wesentlichen relativ zu der Strahlungsquelle (10) festen Stelle, und bei der die optischen Eigenschaften repräsentativ für eine Konzentration eines interessierenden Bestandteiles in der Probe sind, und, fakultativ, bei der

50 die Probe (45) ein Teil eines menschlichen Körpers ist, oder

der interessierende Bestandteil aus einer Gruppe gewählt ist, die aus Glukose, auf Glukose hinweisenden Bestandteilen, Cholesterin, Lipiden, Proteinen, Hämoglobin und dessen Varianten, Mißbrauchsdrogen und auf
55 Mißbrauchsdrogen hinweisenden Bestandteilen gebildet ist.

6. Vorrichtung nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, bei der entweder

a) die illuminierende Strahlung eine Infrarot-Strahlung im Bereich zwischen 700 - 2500 nm umfaßt, oder

b) die Analyseeinrichtung eine Ausgabe erzeugt, die analog zu einer Stelle in einem kolorimetrischen Raum mit n Dimensionen ist, wobei n gleich oder geringer ist als die Anzahl der Detektoren (72,74,76,78) in der Detektionseinrichtung; oder

c) die Detektionseinrichtung (50) ferner einen Schwarz/Weiß-Helligkeitsdetektor aufweist, der empfindlich gegenüber und die Strahlungsempfindlichkeit jeder der Vielzahl von Detektoren überschneidend ist; oder

d) jeder Detektor (72,74,76,78) einen Filter (82,84,86,88) aufweist, der einen Teil des Spektrums der illuminierenden Strahlung überträgt oder reflektiert, wobei jeder Filter (82,84,86,88) eine separate Peak-Übertragungs- oder - Absorptionsempfindlichkeit, die unterschiedlich von den Peak-Übertragungs- oder - Reflexionsempfindlichkeiten der anderen Filter (82,84,86,88) der Detektionseinrichtung (50) ist, und zumindest eine teilweise Überschneidung bezüglich der Übertragungs- oder Reflexionsempfindlichkeit mit zumindest einem der anderen Filter (82,84,86,88) aufweist; oder

e) die Analyseeinrichtung ein neurales Netzwerk aufweist.

7. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 1 aufweisend

a) Strahlenteilungsmittel (60,62,64), um der Anordnung der Vielzahl von Detektoren (72,74,76,78) zu erlauben, derart angeordnet zu werden, daß eine übereinstimmende Probennahme möglich ist; oder

b) einen Faseroptik-Kabelbaum (62',64',68') mit einer Vielzahl von Lichtleitfasern, um der Anordnung der Vielzahl von Detektoren (72,74,76,78) zu erlauben, derart angeordnet zu werden, daß eine übereinstimmende Probennahme möglich ist.

8. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 2, bei der entweder

a) jeder Detektor (72",74",76",78") einen Filter (82",84",86",88") aufweist, der einen Teil des Spektrums der illuminierenden Strahlung überträgt oder reflektiert, wobei jeder Filter eine Peak-Übertragungs- oder - Reflexionsempfindlichkeit, die unterschiedlich von den Peak-Übertragungs- oder - Reflexionsempfindlichkeiten der anderen Filter der Detektionseinrichtung (50) ist, und zumindest eine teilweise Überschneidung bezüglich der Übertragungs- oder Absorptionsempfindlichkeit mit zumindest einem anderen Filter aufweist, das erste Detektionsmittel (50") einen ersten Filtersatz und das zweite Detektionsmittel (50") einen zweiten Filtersatz aufweist und der erste und zweite Filtersatz (82",84",86",88") unterschiedliche Übertragungs- oder Reflexionsempfindlichkeiten aufweisen; oder

b) die Analyseeinrichtung eine Analogie einer Stelle in einem kolorimetrischen Raum mit n Dimensionen aus dem ersten Datenstrom, wobei n gleich oder geringer ist als die Anzahl der Detektoren in jedem der ersten Detektionsmittel (50"), eine Analogie einer Stelle in einem kolorimetrischen Raum mit m Dimensionen aus dem zweiten Datenstrom, wobei m gleich oder geringer ist als die Anzahl der Detektoren in jedem der zweiten Detektionsmittel (50"), erzeugt und die Stellen vergleicht, um das Datensignal zu erzeugen, das auf die optischen Eigenschaften des Objects (45) hinweist; oder

c) jeder Detektor (72",74",76",78") einen Filter (82",84",86",88") mit einer Peak-Strahlungsempfindlichkeit aufweist, die unterschiedlich zu den Peak-Strahlungsempfindlichkeiten der anderen Filter (82,84,86,88) der Detektionseinrichtung (50) ist und zumindest eine teilweise Überschneidung der Strahlungsempfindlichkeit mit zumindest einem anderen Filter aufweist, das erste Detektionsmittel (50") einen ersten Filtersatz (82",84",86",88") und das zweite Detektionsmittel (50") einen zweiten Filtersatz (82",84",86",88") aufweist und der erste und zweite Filtersatz (82",84",86",88") unterschiedliche Übertragungs- oder Reflexionsempfindlichkeiten aufweisen.

9. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 3, bei der die spektrale Struktur des Filters (82,84,86,88) in der Art einer sinusförmigen Übertragungs- oder Reflexionsstruktur ausgebildet ist.

10. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 5, bei der

die Vorrichtung zumindest zwei Probenkammern (40") aufweist, wobei jede Probenkammer (40") derart ange-

ordnet ist, daß die durch die Probenkammer gerichtete Strahlung lediglich auf einem, aber nicht auf beiden, der ersten und zweiten Detektionsmittel (50") auftrifft, und - fakultativ - jede Probenkammer (40") ein damit verbundenes Detektionsmittel (50") und jedes einzelne Detektionsmittel (50") einen beigeordneten eigenen Filtersatz (82",84",86",88") aufweist.

11. Verfahren zur Ermittlung der Konzentration eines interessierenden Bestandteiles in einer Probe (45), aufweisend die Schritte:

Befestigen eines Teiles der interessierenden Probe (45) in einer Position, so daß er mit einem Spektrum der Strahlung von einer Strahlungsquelle (10) bestrahlt werden kann;

Bestrahlen des Teiles der interessierenden Probe mit dem Spektrum der Strahlung von einer Strahlungsquelle (10);

Ermitteln der von der Probe (45) übertragenen oder reflektierten Strahlung, wobei die Ermittlung von einer Detektionseinrichtung (50) durchgeführt wird, die eine Vielzahl einzelner Detektoren (72,74,76,78) umfaßt, wobei jeder Detektor (72,74,76,78) eine Peak-Strahlungsempfindlichkeit, die unterschiedlich zu der Peak-Strahlungsempfindlichkeit der anderen Detektoren ist, und zumindest eine teilweise Überschneidung bezüglich der Strahlungsempfindlichkeit mit zumindest einem anderen Detektor aufweist, wobei jeder Detektor relativ zu dem befestigten Teil der Probe (45) derart angeordnet ist, daß jeder Detektor eine mit den anderen Detektoren übereinstimmende Probennahme ermöglicht, wobei die Detektoren durch die übereinstimmende Probennahme überlagerbar sind, d. h., wenn eine Versetzung eines Detektors von seiner Position auf die Position eines anderen Detektors durchgeführt wird, wird eine identische optische Probennahme erzielt;

Erzeugen eines der von jedem Detektor (72,74,76,78) ermittelten Strahlung entsprechenden Datenstromes; und

Analysieren des Datenstromes, um ein Maß der Konzentration zu erhalten.

12. Verfahren nach Anspruch 11, bei dem

das Ermitteln in dem Ermittlungsschritt von mindestens einem ersten Detektionsmittel (50") und einem zweiten Detektionsmittel (50") durchgeführt wird, die jeweils eine Vielzahl einzelner Detektoren (72",74",76",78") umfassen, wobei jeder Detektor eine Peak-Strahlungsempfindlichkeit, die unterschiedlich zu der Peak-Strahlungsempfindlichkeit der anderen Detektoren (72",74",76",78") in demselben Detektionsmittel (50") ist, und zumindest eine teilweise Überschneidung bezüglich der Strahlungsempfindlichkeit mit zumindest einem anderen Detektor in demselben Detektionsmittel (50") aufweist;

das erste Detektionsmittel (50") in dem Erzeugungsschritt einen ersten Datenstrom erzeugt, der von einer Zusammensetzung einer auf die Konzentration des Bestandteiles hinweisenden Datensignalkomponente und einer Hintergrundkomponente gebildet wird, und das zweite Detektionsmittel (50") einen zweiten Datenstrom erzeugt, der von einer Zusammensetzung einer auf die Konzentration des Bestandteiles hinweisenden Datensignalkomponente und einer Hintergrundkomponente gebildet wird; und

in dem Analyseschritt der erste Datenstrom mit dem zweiten Datenstrom verglichen wird, um ein auf die Konzentration des Bestandteiles hinweisendes Informationssignal zu erzeugen, während die störenden Merkmale des Hintergrundes aus dem ersten Datenstrom und dem zweiten Datenstrom derart wiedergegeben werden, daß sie weniger stark ausgeprägt sind als es der Hintergrund in jedem einzelnen Datenstrom ist.

13. Verfahren nach Anspruch 11, bei dem

das Ermitteln in dem Ermittlungsschritt von einer Detektionseinrichtung (50) durchgeführt wird, die eine Vielzahl einzelner Detektoren (72,74,76,78) umfaßt, wobei jeder Detektor einen beigeordneten Filter (82,84,86,88) mit einer Peak-Übertragung oder -Reflexion aufweist, die unterschiedlich von der Peak-Übertragung oder -Reflexion der anderen Filter (82,84,86,88) ist, wobei die Filter jeweils eine teilweise Überschneidung bezüglich der Übertragungs- oder Reflexionscharakteristik mit zumindest einem anderen Filter (82,84,86,88) aufweisen, wobei zumindest einer der Filter (82,84,86,88) aus einer Gruppe von Filtern (82,84,86,88) ausgewählt ist, die eine derartige Strahlungsempfindlichkeit aufweisen, daß diese Reflexions- oder Absorptionsbänder in dem Teil

des Spektrums aufweisen, über den sie die Strahlung übertragen oder reflektieren, und Filter (82,84,86,88) umfaßt, die lediglich einen engen Übertragungs- oder Reflexionsbereich haben.

14. Verfahren nach Anspruch 11, ferner aufweisend den Schritt

Sammeln der Ausgaben von jedem Detektor (72,74,76,78) durch eine Abfrageeinrichtung, die eine ausreichend schnelle Reaktion hat, um eine deutliche arterielle Pulswellenform zu überwachen, so daß die gesammelten Daten mit Pegeln arteriellen Blutes des interessierenden Bestandteiles in Wechselbeziehung gebracht werden können.

15. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 11 bis 14, bei dem entweder

a) jeder Detektor (72,74,76,78) ferner einen beigeordneten Filter (82,84,86,88) aufweist, wobei jeder beigeordnete Filter eine Peak-Übertragung oder -Reflexion hat, die unterschiedlich von der Peak-Übertragung oder -Reflexion jedes anderen Filters (82,84,86,88) ist, wobei die Filter jeweils eine Überschneidung bezüglich der Strahlungsempfindlichkeit mit zumindest einem anderen Filter (82,84,86,88) aufweisen; oder

b) das Spektrum der illuminierenden Strahlung eine Infrarot-Strahlung im Bereich zwischen 700 - 2500 um umfaßt; oder

c) der Analyseschritt die Bildung einer Analogie einer spezifischen Stelle in einem kolorimetrischen Raum mit n Dimensionen aus dem ersten Datenstrom umfaßt, wobei n gleich oder geringer ist als die Anzahl der Detektoren in der Detektionseinrichtung (50); oder

d) der Analyseschritt von einem neuronalen Netzwerk durchgeführt wird, wobei, optional, das neurale Netzwerk kalibriert und trainiert wird, um die Datenströme derart zu bearbeiten, daß eine analoge Farbbeständigkeit beim Sehen erzielt wird; oder

e) der interessierende Bestandteil aus der Gruppe gewählt ist, die aus Glukose, auf Glukose hinweisenden Bestandteilen, Cholesterin, Lipiden, Proteinen, Hämoglobin und dessen Varianten, Mißbrauchsdrogen und auf Mißbrauchsdrogen hinweisenden Bestandteilen gebildet ist; oder

f) der Analyseschritt die Bildung einer Analogie einer spezifischen Stelle in einem kolorimetrischen Raum mit n Dimensionen aus den Signalen umfaßt, wobei n gleich oder geringer ist als die Anzahl der Detektoren (72,74,76,78) in der Detektionseinrichtung (50).

16. Verfahren nach Anspruch 11, aufweisend entweder:

a) Strahlenteilungsmittel (60,62,64), um der Anordnung der Vielzahl von Detektoren (72,74,76,78) zu erlauben, derart angeordnet zu werden, daß eine übereinstimmende Probennahme möglich ist; oder

b) einen Faseroptik-Kabelbaum (62',64', 66',68') mit einer Vielzahl von Lichtleitfasern, um der Anordnung der Vielzahl von Detektoren (72,74,76,78) zu erlauben, derart angeordnet zu werden, daß eine übereinstimmende Probennahme möglich ist.

17. Verfahren nach Anspruch 12, bei dem der Analyseschritt das Bilden von mindestens zwei verschiedenen Analogien von spezifischen Stellen in verschiedenen kolorimetrischen Räumen aus den Signalen, einen kolorimetrischen Raum mit n Dimensionen von dem ersten Detektionsmittel (50"), wobei n gleich oder geringer ist als die Anzahl der Detektoren in dem ersten Detektionsmittel (50") ist, und einen kolorimetrischen Raum mit m Dimensionen von dem zweiten Detektionsmittel (50"), wobei m gleich oder geringer ist als die Anzahl der Detektoren in dem zweiten Detektionsmittel (50") ist, und das Korrelieren der analogen Stellen für das erste und das zweite Detektionsmittel (50") umfaßt.

18. Verfahren nach Anspruch 14, bei dem das Detektionsmittel (50") eine Vielzahl von Detektionsmitteln (72",74",76",78") aufweist, wobei jedes der Detektionsmittel beigeordnete Filter (82,84,86,88) aufweist, um ein von jedem anderen Detektionsmittel (50") unterschiedliches Signal zu erzeugen, und bei dem die Analyse der Signale den Vergleich der von jedem der Detektionsmittel (50") erhaltenen Signale umfaßt.

Revendications

1. Appareil pour déterminer les propriétés optiques d'un objet, tel qu'un échantillon ou un objet fluorescent, comportant :

une source de rayonnement (10) produisant un spectre de rayonnement d'éclairement pour éclairer une partie dudit objet (45);
des moyens de détection (50) comportant une pluralité de détecteurs (72,74,76,78) adaptés pour produire un signal de sortie, chacun desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78) possédant une réponse spectrale dans une partie dudit spectre de rayonnement d'éclairement émis par ladite source de rayonnement (10), chacun desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78) possédant une réponse spectrale maximale séparée et au moins un chevauchement partiel de caractéristiques de réponse spectrale avec celle d'au moins un autre desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78); et
des moyens d'analyse agencés pour analyser lesdits signaux de sortie provenant des détecteurs (72,74,76,78) pour produire un signal indicatif des propriétés optiques dudit objet (45); et
caractérisé en ce que :
ledit appareil est agencé de telle sorte que chacun desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78) est situé de telle sorte qu'il échantillonne d'une manière congruente le rayonnement provenant dudit objet (45), ce qui a pour effet qu'avec un échantillonnage congruent, les détecteurs peuvent être superposés, c'est-à-dire que si une translocation était exécutée depuis la position d'un détecteur à la position d'un autre détecteur, l'échantillonnage optique identique est obtenu.

2. Appareil selon la revendication 1, dans lequel

lesdits moyens de détection (50) comprennent des premiers moyens de détection (50") adaptés pour recevoir un rayonnement transmis ou réfléchi par une première partie d'échantillon dudit objet (45), lesdits premiers moyens de détection (50") produisant un premier flux de données formé d'un signal composite constitué d'une composante du signal de données indicative desdites propriétés optiques dudit objet (45) et d'une composante de fond, et des seconds moyens de détection (50") adaptés pour recevoir un rayonnement transmis ou réfléchi par une première partie d'échantillon, lesdits seconds moyens de détection (50") produisant un second flux de données formé d'un signal composite constitué d'une composante du signal de données indicatif desdites propriétés optiques dudit objet (45) et d'une composante de fond; et
lesdits moyens d'analyse comprennent des moyens adaptés pour comparer ledit premier flux de données audit second flux de données de manière à produire un signal d'information indicatif des propriétés optiques dudit objet (45), tout en rendant les caractéristiques du fond, qui interfèrent, à partir dudit premier flux de données et dudit second flux de données, moins distinctes que ne l'est le fond individuellement dans l'un ou l'autre des flux de données.

3. Appareil selon la revendication 1 ou la revendication 2, dans lequel :

chacun desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78) comporte un filtre (82,84,86,88) qui transmet ou réfléchit une partie du spectre du rayonnement d'éclairement émis par ladite source de rayonnement (10), chacun desdits filtres (82,84,86,88) possédant une réponse de transmittance ou de réflexion maximale séparée et au moins un chevauchement partiel des caractéristiques de transmittance ou de réflectance avec au moins un autre desdits filtres (82,84,86,88), et au moins l'un desdits filtres (82,84,86,88) dans lesdits moyens de détection étant sélectionné à partir du groupe constitué de filtres (82,84,86,88) possédant une structure spectrale telle qu'il possède des bandes d'absorption dans la partie du spectre dans laquelle il transmet ou réfléchit un rayonnement, et des filtres (82,84,86,88), qui ne possèdent qu'une seule gamme étroite de transmittance ou de réflectance.

4. Appareil selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes servant à déterminer les propriétés optiques d'un objet (tel qu'un échantillon ou un objet fluorescent), dans lequel

une chambre (40) pour l'objet est prévue pour fixer ledit objet (45) en un emplacement essentiellement fixé par rapport à ladite source de rayonnement (10);
des moyens d'analyse sont agencés de manière à analyser les signaux de sortie des détecteurs (72,74,76,78) pour produire une composante du signal de données indicative d'une concentration dudit constituant; et
des moyens d'interrogation sont agencés de manière à collecter des signaux de sortie provenant desdits

détecteurs (72,74,76,78) d'une manière suffisamment rapide pour observer une forme d'onde impulsionnelle artérielle distincte de manière à permettre une différenciation desdits constituants, auxquels on s'intéresse, dans le sang artériel, contrairement au sang veineux ou au sang tissulaire, dans ledit objet (45).

- 5 5. Appareil selon la revendication 1, 2, 3 ou 4, dans lequel ledit objet (45) est un échantillon, et comprenant en outre au moins une chambre à échantillon (40) pour fixer ladite partie dudit échantillon (45) dans une position essentiellement fixée par rapport à ladite source de rayonnement (10), et dans lequel les propriétés optiques sont représentatives d'une concentration d'un constituant, auquel on s'intéresse, dans ledit échantillon, et facultativement dans lequel

10 ledit échantillon (45) comprend une partie d'un corps humain, ou ledit constituant, auquel on s'intéresse, est choisi dans le groupe comprenant le glucose, les constituants indiquant le glucose, le cholestérol, des lipides, des protéines, de l'hémoglobine et ses variantes, un excès de médicaments et des constituants indiquant un excès de médicaments.

- 15 6. Appareil selon la revendication 1, 2, 3 ou 4, dans lequel :

- a) ledit rayonnement d'éclairement comprend un rayonnement infrarouge dans la gamme de 700-2500 nm; ou
 20 b) lesdits moyens d'analyse produisent un signal de sortie qui est l'élément analogue d'un emplacement dans un espace colorimétrique à n dimensions, n étant égal ou inférieur au nombre de détecteurs (72,74,76,78) dans lesdits moyens de détection; ou
 c) lesdits moyens détecteurs (50) comprennent en outre un détecteur de luminosité noir/blanc, qui est apte à répondre à et chevauche ladite réponse spectrale de l'ensemble de ladite pluralité de détecteurs; ou
 25 d) chacun desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78) comprend un filtre (82,84,86,88), qui transmet ou réfléchit une partie dudit spectre du rayonnement d'éclairement, chacun desdits filtres (82,84,86,88) possédant une réponse de transmittance ou d'absorbance maximale séparée, qui diffère des réponses de transmittance ou de réflectance maximales des autres filtres (82,84,86,88) desdits moyens de détection (50) et au moins un chevauchement partiel de la réponse de transmittance et de réflectance avec au moins un autre desdits filtres (82,84,86,88); ou
 30 e) lesdits moyens d'analyse comprennent un réseau neuronal.

7. Appareil selon la revendication 1, comprenant :

- a) des moyens (60,62,64) de division de faisceau permettant de disposer ladite pluralité des détecteurs
 35 (72,74,76,78) pour obtenir un échantillonnage congruent; ou
 b) des faisceaux de câbles à fibres optiques (62',64',66',68') contenant une pluralité de fibres optiques de manière à permettre à ladite pluralité de détecteurs (72',74',76',78') d'être disposés de manière à fournir un échantillonnage congruent.

- 40 8. Appareil selon la revendication 2, dans lequel :

- a) chacun desdits détecteurs (72",74",76",78") comprend un filtre (82",84",86",88") qui transmet ou réfléchit une partie dudit spectre du rayonnement d'éclairement, chacun desdits filtres possédant une réponse de transmittance ou de réflectance maximale, qui est différente des réponses de transmittance ou de réflectance maximale des autres filtres desdits moyens de détection (50) et au moins un chevauchement partiel dans la
 45 réponse de transmittance ou d'absorbance avec au moins un autre filtre, lesdits premiers moyens de détection (50") possédant un premier ensemble de filtres, et lesdits seconds moyens de détection (50") possédant un second ensemble de filtres, et lesdits premier et second ensembles de filtres (82",84",86",88") possédant des réponses de transmittance ou de réflectance différentes; ou
 50 b) lesdits moyens d'analyse produisent un élément analogue dans un espace colorimétrique à n dimensions à partir dudit premier flux de données, n étant égal ou inférieur au nombre de détecteurs dans chacun desdits premiers moyens de détection (50"); un élément analogue d'un emplacement dans un espace colorimétrique à m dimensions à partir dudit second flux de données, m étant égal ou inférieur au nombre de détecteurs dans lesdits seconds moyens de détection (50"); et compare lesdits emplacements de manière à produire ledit
 55 signal de données indicatif des propriétés optiques dudit objet (45); ou
 c) chacun desdits détecteurs (72",74",76",78") possède un filtre (82",84",86",88") possédant une réponse spectrale maximale différente des réponses spectrales maximales des autres filtres (82,84,86,88) desdits moyens de détection (50) et au moins un chevauchement partiel de la réponse spectrale avec au moins un

autre filtre, lesdits premiers moyens de détection (50") possédant un premier ensemble de filtres (82",84",86",88") et lesdits seconds moyens de détection (50") possédant un second ensemble de filtres (82",84",86",88") et lesdits premier et second ensembles de filtres (50") possédant des réponses de transmittance ou de réflectance spectrale différentes.

9. Appareil selon la revendication 3, dans lequel ladite structure spectrale dudit filtre (82,84,86,88) se présente sous la forme d'une structure de transmittance ou de réflectance sinusoïdale.

10. Appareil selon la revendication 5, dans lequel :

ledit appareil comprend au moins deux chambres à échantillons (40"), chacune desdites chambres à échantillons (40") étant agencée de telle sorte que le rayonnement traversant ces chambres rencontre seulement un desdits premier et second moyens de détection (50"), mais pas les deux; et facultativement chacune desdites chambres à échantillons (40") possède des moyens de détection (50") qui lui sont associés, chacun desdits moyens de détection individuels (50") possédant son propre ensemble de filtres (82",84",86",88"), qui lui est associé.

11. Procédé pour déterminer la concentration d'un constituant, auquel on s'intéresse, dans un échantillon (45), comprenant les étapes consistant à :

affecter une partie dudit échantillon (45), auquel on s'intéresse, dans une position telle qu'il peut être éclairé par un spectre de rayonnement provenant d'une source de rayonnement (10);
éclairer ladite partie dudit échantillon, auquel on s'intéresse, avec ledit spectre de rayonnement provenant de ladite source de rayonnement (10);
détecter le rayonnement transmis ou réfléchi par ledit échantillon (45), ladite détection étant exécutée par des moyens de détection (50) contenant une pluralité de détecteurs individuels (72,74,76,78), chacun desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78) possédant une réponse spectrale maximale distincte de la réponse spectrale maximale de n'importe quel autre desdits détecteurs, la réponse spectrale de chacun desdits détecteurs se chevauchant avec au moins celle d'au moins un desdits autres détecteurs, chacun desdits détecteurs étant situé par rapport à ladite position fixée dudit échantillon (45) de telle sorte que chacun desdits détecteur fournit un échantillonnage congruent avec les autres desdits détecteurs, ce qui a pour effet qu'avec un échantillonnage congruent, les détecteurs sont superposables, c'est-à-dire que si une translocation a été réalisée de la position d'un détecteur à la position d'un autre détecteur, l'échantillonnage optique identique est obtenu;
produire un flux de données correspondant audit rayonnement détecté provenant de chacun desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78); et
analyser lesdits flux de données pour obtenir une mesure de concentration.

12. Procédé selon la revendication 11, selon lequel :

lors de ladite étape de détection, ladite détection est exécutée par au moins un premier moyen de détection (50") et par un second moyen de détection (50"), dont chacun contient une pluralité de détecteurs individuels (72", 74", 76", 78"), chacun desdits détecteurs possédant une réponse spectrale maximale distincte de la réponse spectrale maximale de n'importe quel autre desdits détecteurs (72",74",76",78") dans le même moyen de détection (50"), la réponse spectrale desdits détecteurs (72",74",76",78") chevauchant la réponse spectrale d'au moins l'un desdits autres détecteurs dans ledit même moyen de détection (50"),
lors de ladite étape de production, ledit moyen de détection (50") produit un premier flux de données formé d'un signal composite d'une composante du signal de données indicative de ladite concentration dudit constituant et d'une composante de fond, et ledit second moyen de détection (50") produit un second flux de données formé d'un signal composite d'une composante du signal de données indicative de ladite concentration dudit constituant et d'une composante de fond;
lors de ladite étape d'analyse, comparer ledit premier flux de données audit second flux de données pour produire un signal d'information indicatif de la concentration dudit constituant, tout en rendant les caractéristiques du fond, qui interfèrent, à partir desdits premier et second flux de données de manière qu'elles soient moins distinctes que le fond individuellement dans l'un ou l'autre des flux de données.

13. Procédé selon la revendication 11, selon lequel :

lors de ladite étape de détection, ladite détection étant effectuée par des moyens de détection (50) contenant

une pluralité de détecteurs individuels (72,74,76,78), chacun desdits détecteurs comportant un filtre associé (82,84,86,88), qui possède une transmittance ou une réflectance maximale distincte de la transmittance ou de la réflectance maximale de n'importe quel autre desdits filtres (82,84,86,88), lesdites caractéristiques de transmittance ou de réflectance de chacun desdits filtres se chevauchant avec celles d'au moins l'un desdits autres filtres (82,84,86,88), au moins l'un desdits filtres étant sélectionné dans le groupe comprenant des filtres (82,84,86,88) possédant une réponse spectrale telle qu'ils possèdent des bandes de réflectance ou de transmittance dans la partie du spectre dans laquelle il émet ou réfléchit un rayonnement, et les filtres (82,84,86,88), qui possèdent seulement une gamme étroite de transmittance ou de réflectance.

14. Procédé selon la revendication 11, comprenant en outre l'étape consistant à :

collecter des signaux de sortie provenant de chacun desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78) en utilisant des moyens d'interrogation, qui possèdent une réponse suffisamment rapide pour observer une impulsion artérielle distincte de telle sorte que les données collectées peuvent être corrélées à des niveaux de sang artériel dudit constituant auquel on s'intéresse.

15. Procédé selon la revendication 11, 12, 13 ou 14, selon lequel :

- a) chacun desdits détecteurs (72,74,76,78) comprend en outre un filtre associé (82,84,86,88), chacun desdits filtres associés possédant une transmittance ou une réflectance maximale distincte de la transmittance ou de la réflectance maximale de n'importe lequel des autres filtres (82,84,86,88), la réponse spectrale de chacun desdits filtres (82,84,86,88) présentant un chevauchement avec celle d'au moins un autre desdits filtres, ou
- b) ledit spectre de rayonnement d'éclairage comprend un rayonnement infrarouge dans la gamme de 700-2500 nm; ou
- c) ladite étape d'analyse comprend la formation d'un élément analogue d'une position spécifique dans un espace colorimétrique à n dimensions, à partir dudit flux de données, n étant égal ou inférieur au nombre de détecteurs dans lesdits moyens de détection (50); ou
- d) ladite étape d'analyse est exécutée par un réseau neuronal, auquel cas facultativement ledit réseau neuronal est étalonné et entraîné pour traiter lesdits flux de données pour obtenir un élément analogue de la constance des couleurs lors de l'observation; ou
- e) ledit constituant, auquel on s'intéresse, est sélectionné dans le groupe comprenant le glucose, les constituants indiquant le glucose, le cholestérol, des lipides, des protéines, de l'hémoglobine et ses variantes, un excès de médicaments et des constituants indiquant un excès de médicaments,
- f) ladite étape d'analyse comprend la formation d'un élément analogue d'une position spécifique dans un espace colorimétrique à n dimensions à partir desdits signaux, n étant égal ou inférieur au nombre de détecteurs (72,74,76,78) situés dans lesdits moyens de détection (50).

16. Procédé selon la revendication 11, comprenant :

- a) des moyens (62,64,66) de division de faisceau pour permettre de disposer ladite pluralité de détecteurs (72,74,76,78) de manière à obtenir un échantillonnage congruent; ou
- b) des faisceaux de câbles à fibres optiques (62',64',66',68') contenant une pluralité de fibres optiques de manière à permettre la disposition de ladite pluralité de détecteurs (72',74',76',78') pour obtenir un échantillonnage congruent.

17. Procédé selon la revendication 12, selon lequel ladite étape d'analyse consiste à former au moins deux éléments analogues distincts de positions spécifiques dans des espaces colorimétriques distincts à partir desdits signaux, un espace à n dimensions à partir desdits premiers moyens de détection (50"), n étant égal ou inférieur au nombre de détecteurs dans lesdits premiers moyens de détection (50"), et un espace à m dimensions à partir dudit second moyen de détection (50"), m étant égal ou inférieur au nombre de détecteurs (72",74",76",78") dans lesdits seconds moyens de détection (50") et mettre en corrélation lesdites positions analogues pour lesdits premier et second moyens de détection (50").

18. Procédé selon la revendication 14, selon lequel lesdits moyens de détection (50") comprennent une pluralité de moyens de détection (72",74",76",78"), chacun desdits moyens de détection comportant des filtres (82,84,86,88) qui leur sont associés pour produire un signal distinct à partir de n'importe quel autre desdits moyens de détection (50"), et dans lequel ladite analyse desdits signaux comprend une comparaison desdits signaux fournis par chacun desdits moyens de détection (50").

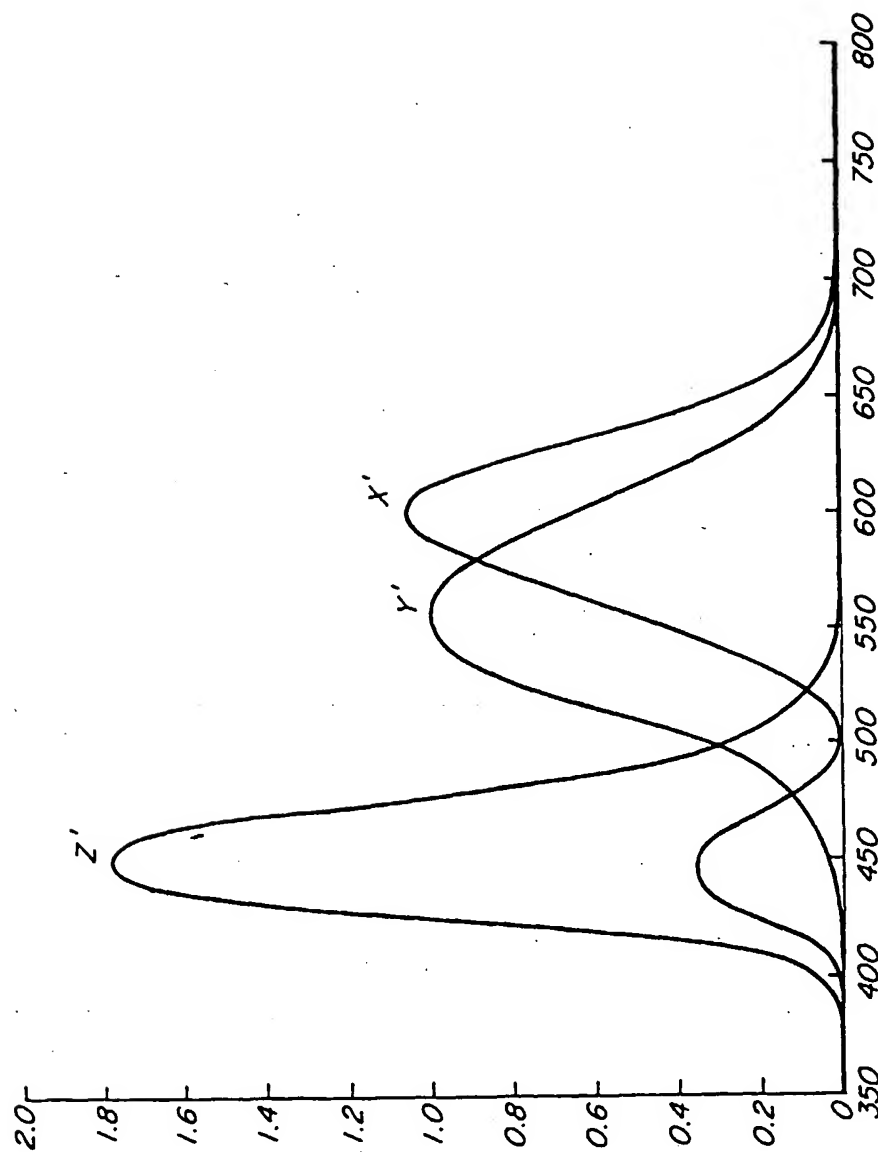


FIG. 1A

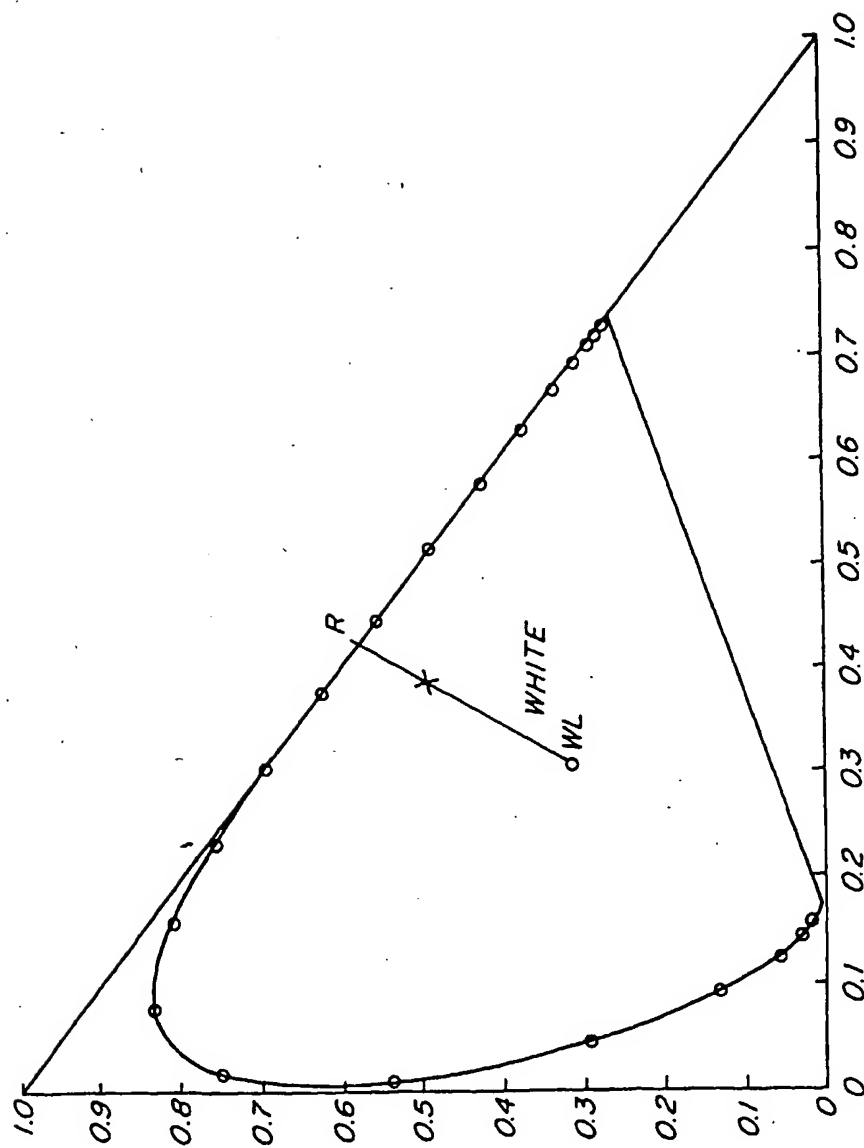


FIG. 1B

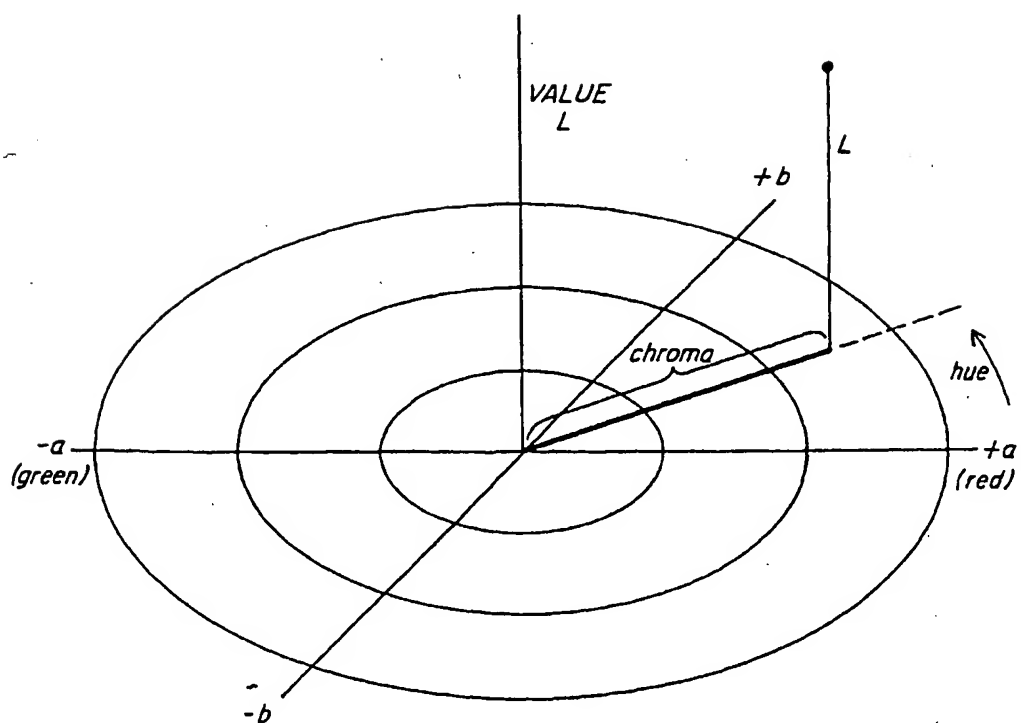
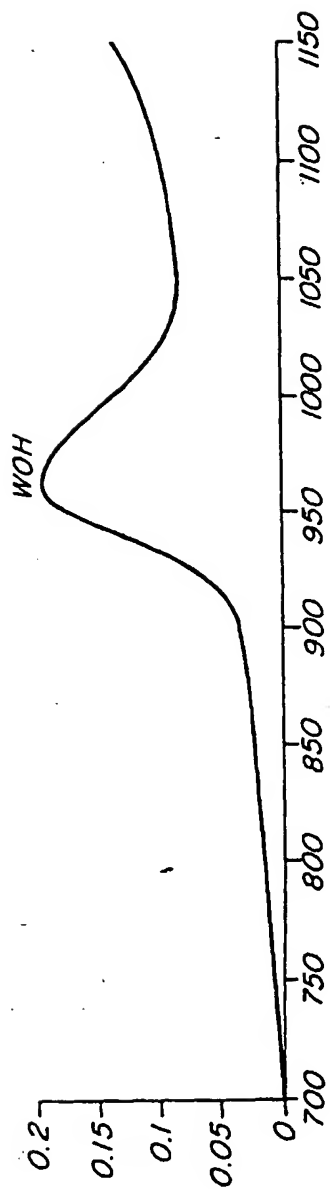
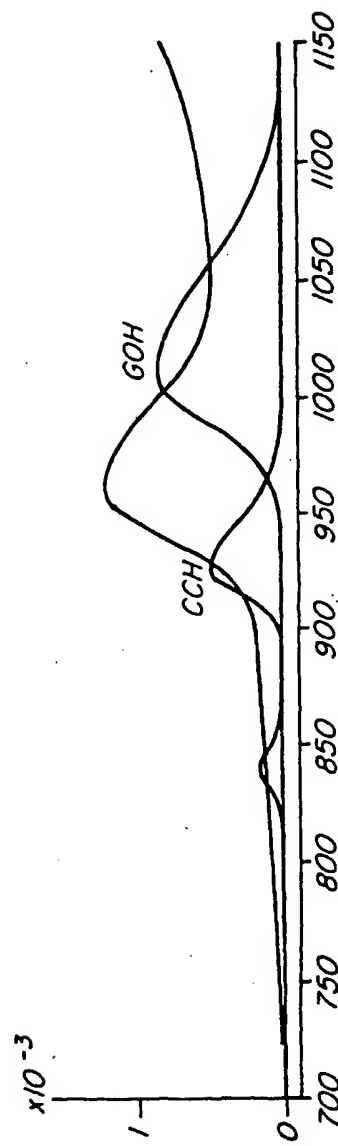


FIG. 2

*FIG. 3A**FIG. 3B*

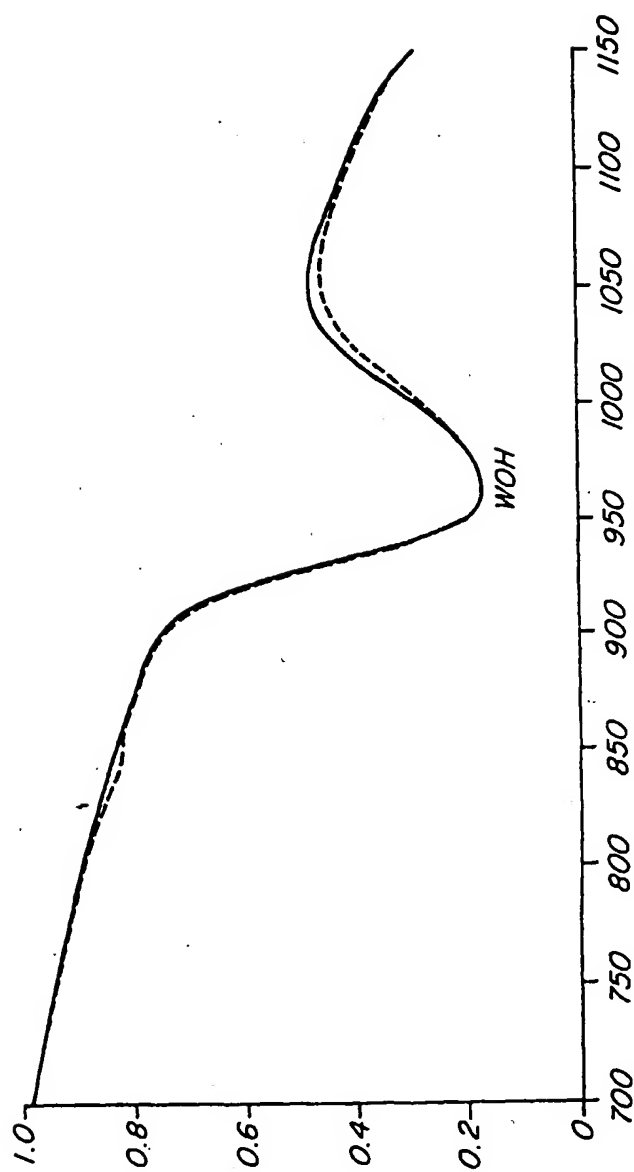


FIG. 3C

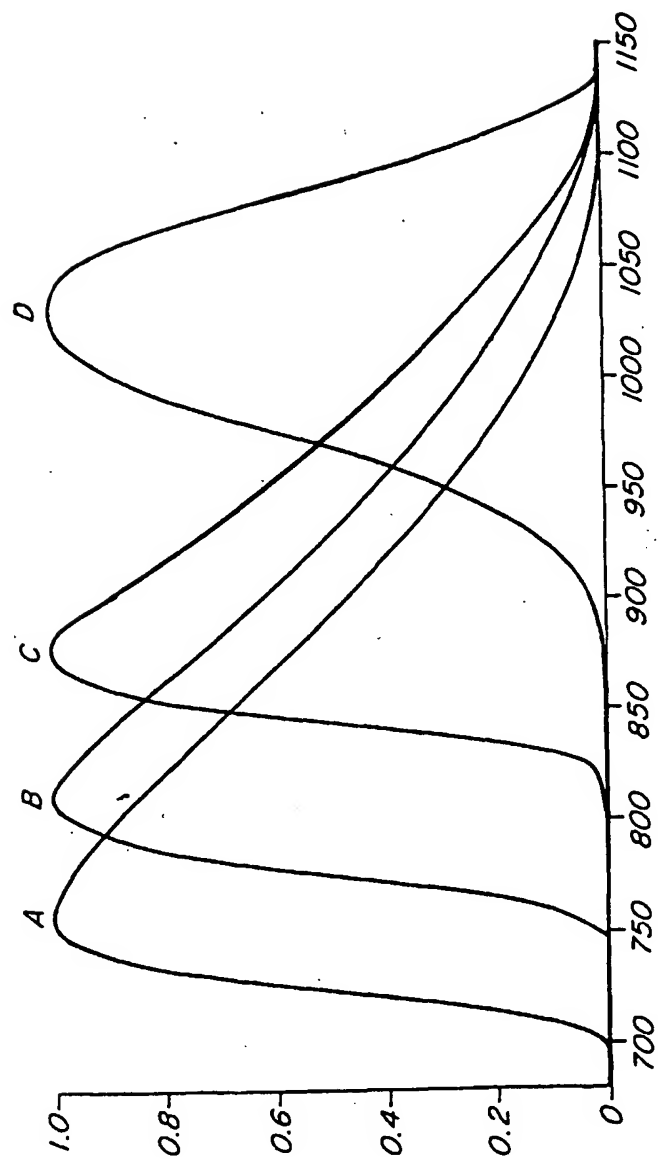


FIG. 4A

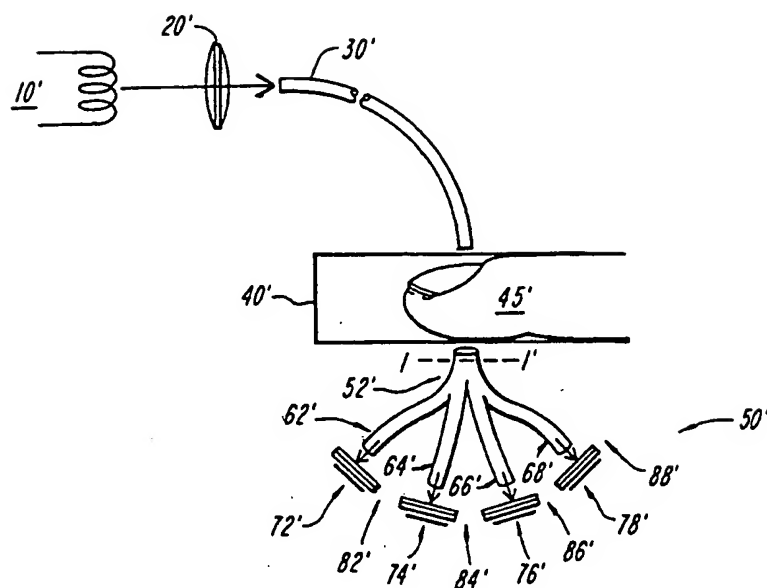


FIG. 6

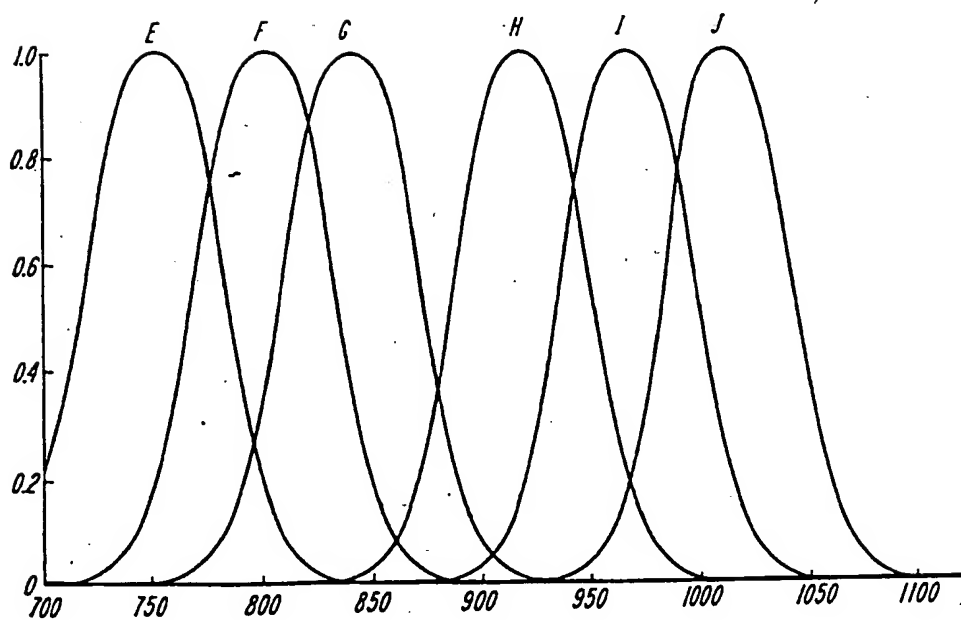


FIG. 4B

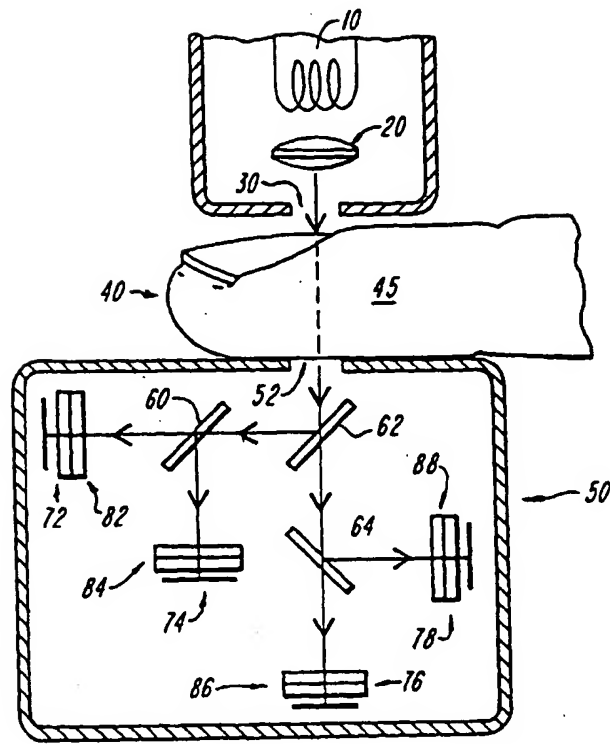


FIG. 5A

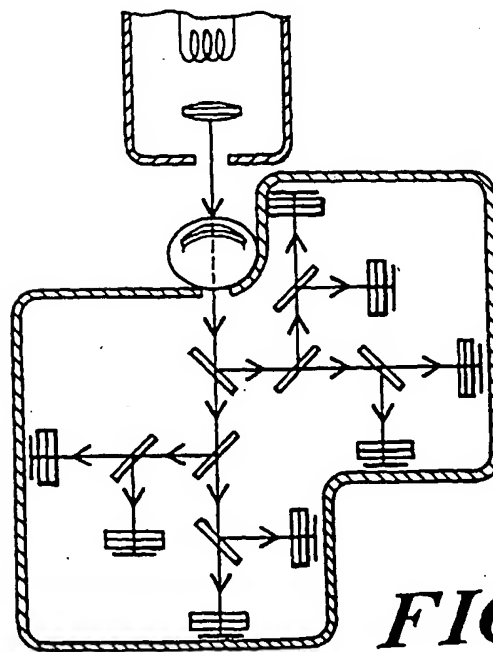


FIG. 5B

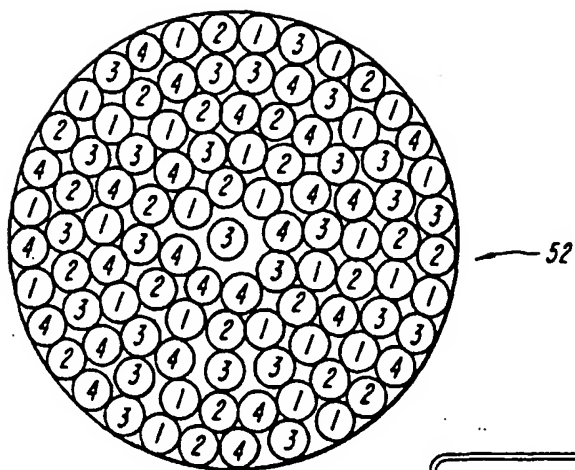


FIG. 7

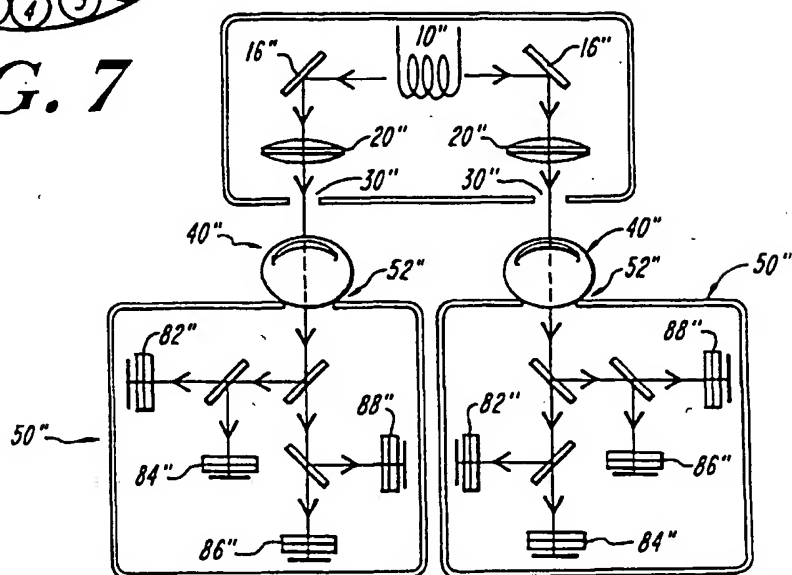


FIG. 8

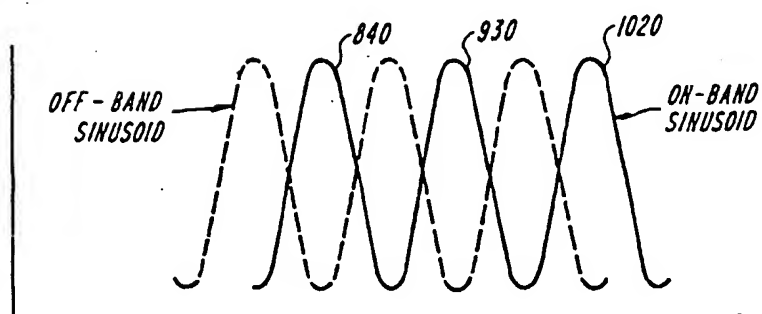


FIG. 9

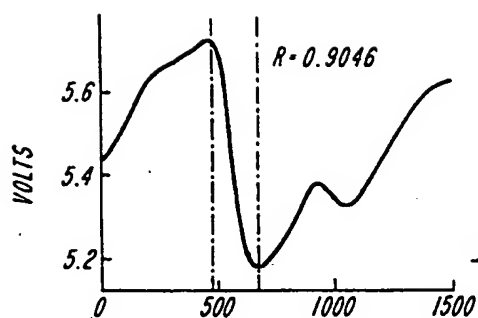


FIG. 10A

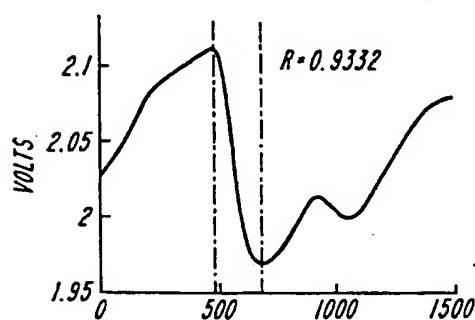


FIG. 10B

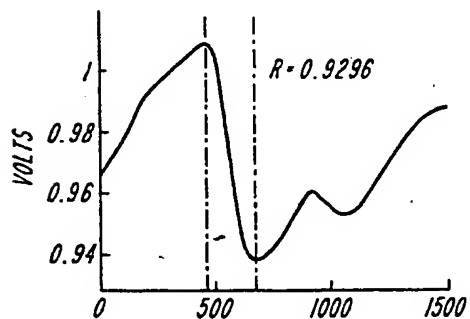


FIG. 10C

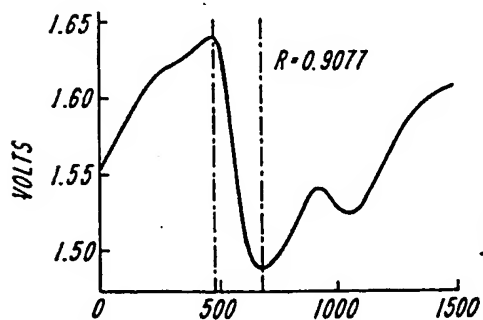


FIG. 10D

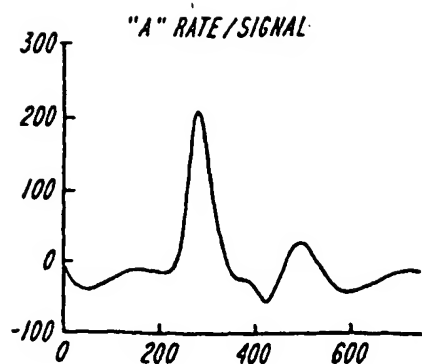


FIG. 11A

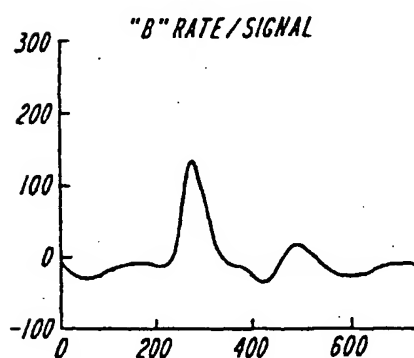


FIG. 11B

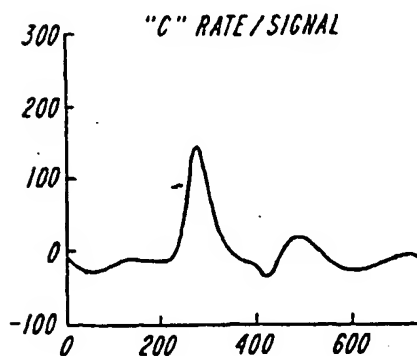


FIG. 11C

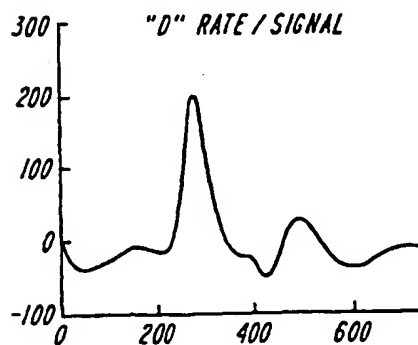


FIG. 11D